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## **Editorial**

*Prof. Geri Smyth,  
University of Strathclyde  
Guest Editor*

As the demography of Northern Europe changes due to global political and economic factors, so does the demography of school classrooms. In Scotland in 2010, teachers were working with learners who are speakers of 138 different languages and whose origins are culturally and ethnically diverse.

In November 2010 the Teacher Education Teachers' Work research group were delighted to host a 2 day seminar in Glasgow, Scotland entitled *Linguistic and Cultural Encounters: Explorations in Scotland and Norway*. This seminar coincided with the study visit of colleagues from Hedmark University College in Norway. Over the two days forty academics from Hedmark University College and the Universities of Glasgow and Strathclyde in Scotland explored what responding to diversity means for teachers and learners in Scottish and Norwegian schools. 20 papers were presented on topics including linguistic diversity, religious diversity, citizenship disabled learners' perspective and early years education.

This special issue of the TETW Journal presents a peer reviewed selection of those papers. We are fortunate to have a Guest Introduction to this issue by Professor Lars Anders Kulbrandstad from Hedmark University College.

In the first paper Anne Marit Danbolt discusses an action research project in which young bilingual pupils developed bilingual dictionaries in collaboration with parents, thus valuing the parents and home languages as a resource for their children's literacy development and bridging the potential gap between home and school language. In the second paper Julie McAdam and Evelyn Arizpe explore the responses of three Scottish teachers to the learning strategies used in an international research project: *Visual Journeys*. This project considered how children constructed meaning from visual images in contemporary wordless picture books, developed their visual literacy skills and created communities of critical readers that allowed them to reflect on their own or others' experiences of migration, journeys and foreign worlds. The third paper, from Camilla Eline Andersen and Sigrun Sand reports on a survey conducted with kindergarten staff in Norway related to how they worked with children and families from linguistic and cultural minorities. The authors pose recommendations for politicians and institutions providing preschool teacher education regarding staff preparation for linguistic and cultural diversity. The fourth paper by Khadija Mohammed reports on her interviews with three mainstream bilingual teachers from the West of Scotland and highlights the ways in which the linguistic expertise bilingual teachers in addition to their own lived experiences can be used to inform the whole school community in supporting cultural diversity. The final paper in this issue is by Thor Ola Engen and Sidsel Lied who propose a new principle of differentiation within the mainstream classroom, dual qualitative differentiation aimed at prevention of submersion for language minority.

I wish to take this opportunity to thank all participants in the seminar and also the teaching staff in Glasgow City Council who welcomed our colleagues from Hedmark into their schools during this week long study trip. I also wish to sincerely thank all the reviewers of the articles for these papers who helped to ensure such a strong collection of papers and particular thanks to Mary Welsh for preparing the papers for publication.

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***Guest Introduction***

## **The Importance of Teaching and Research on Multicultural Issues in Teacher Education in Norway**

**Professor Lars Anders Kulbrandstad**

*Hedmark University College, Norway*

Hedmark University College is located in the interior of south-eastern Norway, some 100 kilometres north of Oslo. The economy in this part of the country has traditionally been based on agriculture and forestry; there has been some industry, but it has not played an important role. The area is often considered to be less open to the outer world and less dynamic than the coastal regions, and the population more stable and homogenous. Actually, the truth differs from this perception; the district has long had minority groups like the Southern Sámi, the Forest Finns and the Travellers and over the centuries people have migrated into the region for different reasons and have created more cultural and ethnic diversity than stereotypical conceptions portray.

In more recent times, incomers have predominantly been refugees and asylum seekers, but increasingly also people from the EU-zone who come to work here for a short or long time, mostly in tourism or construction. The first large contingent of refugees was Vietnamese “boat people” who came to a local reception centre that was set up in the early 1980s. Many of them settled in the area and this created a need for greater cultural, linguistic and other relevant competence among teachers, social workers and medical personnel. Hamar College of Teacher Education – the forerunner of today’s Faculty of Education and Natural Sciences at Hedmark University College – was challenged by the Norwegian Refugee Council to design a program that could meet some of this need. The result was a 30 ETCS course called “Immigrant Knowledge” which had an academic curriculum with contributions from education, linguistics and social studies. This course has been offered without interruption ever since, albeit under changing names (“Immigrant education” and “Multicultural education”) and with revised and updated academic content. After a while, other courses were developed, mainly in-service courses such as “Norwegian as a second language” and “Language and education for minority mother tongue teachers”.

To begin with, only a couple of staff members at the college were involved in these programmes, but soon other colleagues were recruited. This was partly due to increased teaching activities, and partly the result of research and development projects that were initiated, often more or less directly linked to course development. One of the first major projects was “Models for educating refugees and asylum seekers in rural areas” (Engen 1994a, Engen 1994b); other projects concerned home-school connection as experienced by minority parents of preschool children (Sand, 1996), patterns of language use, language attitudes and language proficiency among minority children and teenagers (Kulbrandstad 1997), and school achievements of bilingual pupils (Engen, Kulbrandstad & Sand 1997).

By the end of the 1990s colleagues at Hedmark University College who were engaged as teachers and researchers in the field of minority education had published a number of books and articles on a variety of relevant issues (e.g. Aasen 1997; Engen & Kulbrandstad, 1998; Kulbrandstad L.A. 1995, Kulbrandstad L.I. 1998, Kulbrandstad, L.I. 1999; Sand 1999), had been at several conferences in Norway and abroad, often as invited speakers, had been appointed to important boards and committees, had written or co-written reports and policy recommendations and were members of numerous national and international networks. We had formalized cooperation between ourselves in

the shape of a group which initially was called "Minority studies" and later renamed to "Multidisciplinary group for studies of linguistic and cultural encounters".

When Hedmark University College in 2003 decided to designate some focus areas among its academic programmes, one of them was "Multicultural kindergarten and school". The designation had a stimulating effect on the Multidisciplinary Group, not least because the status as focus area meant extra funding. The group recruited more members, and at present we count twenty-two persons. The majority come from education and Nordic linguistic and literary studies, but religious studies and social studies are also represented. Research activities have increased considerably, national and international conferences have been organized, and we are active members of a number of academic networks.

The early 1990s then was the start of a long lasting engagement for Hedmark University College in recruiting and qualifying members of bilingual minorities to the teacher profession. Colleagues from our college have been central in the development and implementation of a national Bachelor's programme for bilingual teachers, and among the courses we offer within this programme are bilingual pedagogy, didactics of language teaching, and Somali language. One of the recent large international conferences that the Multidisciplinary group organised was "Teacher Diversity in Diverse Schools – Challenges and Opportunities for Teacher Education" (Ringen, Kjørven & Gagné, 2009) took place in November 2008.

Our activities within bilingual teacher education brought us in contact with colleagues from the University of Strathclyde. Members of the Multidisciplinary Group had worked with Dr. Geri Smyth at conferences and network meetings, and she was an invited plenary speaker at the 2008 conference at Hedmark University College. At present, colleagues from the University of Strathclyde and Hedmark University College work together with other British and Norwegian researchers as well as researchers from Canada and Iceland in a newly established international research network called "Diverse Teachers for Diverse Students".

Over the 30 year period that Hedmark University College has been active within the field of minority and bilingual education, the demographic, cultural and linguistic shape of Norway has changed significantly. The country has always been multicultural and multilingual, but today this is much more apparent than before. When we first offered courses to teachers of Vietnamese refugees in the early 1980s, the immigrant population – defined as persons born abroad and persons born in Norway of foreign born parents – formed approximately 2.5% of the population. On January 1 2011, the percentage was 12.2. More than 150 different languages are estimated to be spoken in the present period in Norway (Kulbrandstad, 2004).

At the same time as Norway has become increasingly diverse, the ideas of multicultural education and multicultural nation building have been met with increasing scepticism if not straightforward opposition. The tragic events that took place on July 22 2011 could perhaps lead to a change of attitudes. On that day, a 32 year old white Norwegian man first blew up a bomb in front of the government offices in central Oslo killing eight people and injuring around thirty, ten of them seriously. The terrorist then went to an island in a lake an hour's drive from Oslo where the youth organization of the Labour party had its annual summer camp. Disguised as a policeman, he got access to the island pretending that he had come to inform the youth about the bombing that had taken place in the capital. There, in the course of an hour, he cold-bloodedly massacred sixty-nine persons and injured sixty-six, many of them seriously. The terrorist clearly expressed his motivation for these gruesome acts: He saw himself as a commander in a war against the multicultural society. The Norwegian population responded to his evil deeds with an almost united peaceful yes to

openness, tolerance and diversity. We who through our teaching and research over a long period of time have tried to foster these values, take this as an encouragement for continued engagement and efforts. On all levels in the educational system, there is a need for research and development projects that can help policy makers, school administrators and teachers create a more inclusive school where differences in linguistic and cultural background are seen as an enrichment for everyone involved. The Mulitdisciplinary Group at Hedmark University College is prepared to take on such projects and welcomes our collaboration with colleagues in Scotland and elsewhere in this important work.

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## **Bilingual home-made dictionaries as bridges between home and school**

**Anne Marit Vesteraas Danbolt,**

*Hedmark University College*

**Contact e-mail address: [anne.danbolt@hihm.no](mailto:anne.danbolt@hihm.no)**

### **Abstract**

The literacy experiences children bring to school represent a foundation for their literacy development in early schooling. These familiar literacy practices may or may not resemble the literacy practices children encounter in school. Mismatches between the nature and uses of literacy at home and at school have been stated as a cause of children's difficulties in literacy learning (Heath 1983, Paratore 2002). Building bridges between home and school literacies is thus of great importance in lifting literacy levels among all children and especially those of a language minority background.

Parental involvement has a strong impact on children's attainment in early schooling (Desforges & Abouchar 2007). Schools should therefore encourage parents to take part in the activities that enhance literacy development. However, linguistic minority parents might feel discouraged in cases where they have little knowledge of the language of instruction. Especially in such cases, schools should actively attempt to link children's home and school literacies, in order to facilitate their literacy development.

In a project using an action research design, the researcher and teacher have collaborated to find ways to include the home languages of the bilingual learners in everyday activities. The specific approach was the development of the pupils' own bilingual dictionary, in order to make visible the parents' first language and value their competence as a resource for their children's literacy development. The involvement of the parents was crucial, as they played an active part in the development of language activities that could form a bridge between school and home literacies.

This article will present findings from an action research project in a first grade class in the county of Hedmark in Norway. The outset for the project was an interest in language awareness in multilingual classes, aiming at finding ways to use multilingualism as a resource for developing linguistic awareness among beginning readers. However, the focus of the study broadened considerably during the research period. Through classroom observations and interviews with the parents of the bilingual pupils, interesting aspects of conceptions of literacy and home-school relationship emerged.

In what follows, I will present the background, the context, and the methodological approach for the project. A particular characteristic of this project is the home-made dictionaries made by the bilingual pupils and their parents. With this as an outset, I will give some examples of dialogues taking place in the classroom and also some excerpts of interviews with the parents. I will then discuss these examples in light of socio-cultural theories of literacy.

### **Background and context**



Norway has a relatively small immigrant population<sup>1</sup>, with a percentage of 11,4 % on national level (Statistics Norway 2010). There are however big differences between the regions, for instance the percentage of immigrants is only about 7 % in the inland county of Hedmark, whereas in the capital Oslo, nearly 30 % of the population is of immigrant background.

The project took place at a rather big school in the Norwegian context, with about 500 pupils. Nearly 15 % of the pupils were of a linguistic minority background, and the school took pride in its profile as a multicultural school, looking upon linguistic and cultural diversity as a valuable resource. There were more than 50 pupils in first grade. Usually they were divided into three groups. Only four of these pupils were of a linguistic minority background, in the sense that the language they used in their home was a language other than Norwegian. They were all girls, and of different language backgrounds, as shown in the table below.<sup>2</sup> Three of the girls had attended kindergarten in Norway, while one of them had recently arrived from abroad with her family.

	Sarah	Belmina	Linh	Rahaf
Home language	Arabic	Serbo-Croatian	Vietnamese	Somali

They were given instruction in basic Norwegian in a withdrawal class four hours per week<sup>3</sup>. Three of the children got some first language support, but mostly limited to only one hour per week, after classes.

There were several teachers in the first grade team. One of them had a special responsibility for the bilingual pupils as she also had the required qualifications. She was my main partner in the project. She had recently obtained an MA in education and took a special interest in home-school cooperation. This degree was not required for her position as teacher, but gave her special qualifications for her job. Before these four children started school, she visited the kindergarten and got acquainted with the parents. A key point in the project was the involvement of the parents, and we arranged some separate meetings with the bilingual parents in connection with arrangements for the first grade parents' group. At these meetings, interpretation was provided for some of the languages.

### **Methodological approach**

We chose action research as methodological approach in the project. Reason & Bradbury (2001) talk about "the action research family" to describe "approaches to inquiry which are participative, grounded in experience, and action-oriented" (op.cit. xxiv). In other words, the collaboration between the practitioner(s) and researcher(s) is a characteristic of action research<sup>4</sup>. It is grounded in

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<sup>1</sup> Immigrants and those born in Norway to immigrant parents (Statistics Norway 2010).

<sup>2</sup> The names have been altered and minor changes made in this information to preserve anonymity.

<sup>3</sup> On national level 6,7 % of pupils in Norwegian primary and lower secondary school received instruction in Norwegian for pupils with another first language than Norwegian and Sami 2009-2010 [http://utdanningsdirektoratet.no/upload/Statistikk/GSI/GSI\\_2010\\_2011\\_forelopije\\_tall.pdf](http://utdanningsdirektoratet.no/upload/Statistikk/GSI/GSI_2010_2011_forelopije_tall.pdf)

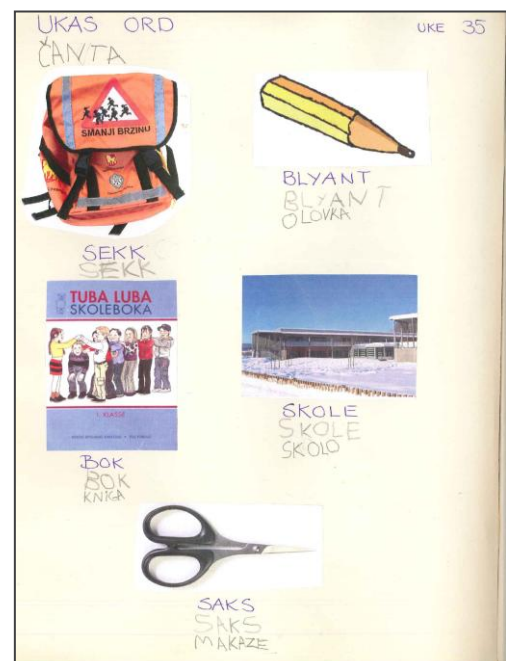
<sup>4</sup> There are strands of action research focusing on "teacher as researcher", where teachers do research on their work as practitioners, without the involvement of an external researcher.

experience in the sense that the outset often is a problem identified by practitioners, and the aim is to bring about changes. These changes should ideally improve practice, and the participants will gain new knowledge about practice. In educational action research, teachers and researchers cooperate closely on making innovations and reflecting on the outcome of changes imposed on the learning environment of the participants (Danbolt & Kulbrandstad 2008). Action research is in its nature explorative, implying that the results are not always predictable, and the outcome may be different from what you expect. This is also true for our collaborative project, as stated initially. We had a mutual interest in developing new ways of including and making visible the home language of the bilingual pupils, in other words, a language as resource orientation (Schechter & Cummins 2003:5).

### The Home-Made Dictionary

The approach that was used for connecting the parents to the everyday work in the school was the home-made dictionary (picture 1). Each week, the teacher gave the four children who were learning Norwegian as an additional language, some words on a piece of paper. She presented these words to the children in the withdrawal class, and the piece of paper was pasted into their dictionaries. The children brought the books home to let the parents look at it and write the words in the book in their home language, thus making a homemade "dictionary". The teacher encouraged the parents to talk with their children in their home language about the pictures she was sending home. The children brought their books back to the additional language group, and they presented their words to the teacher and each other <sup>5</sup>.

After some weeks, letters were introduced as part of the basic literacy instruction and pictures were selected to illustrate the initial sound of the word in Norwegian. All pupils in first grade followed the same sequence in the introduction of the letters, including the four bilingual pupils. The rationale for this practice in this particular context was that the four bilingual pupils received their literacy instruction in Norwegian, with some extra support given in the withdrawal classes. Only the bilingual pupils used the home-made dictionary.



<sup>5</sup> As the work progressed, the teacher put the words up on big charts. These charts were also used in the first grade classroom so that all the pupils could benefit from the approach. The other pupils showed a keen interest in these charts, and expressed positive attitudes towards their bilingual peers, as their home languages were made visible in the classroom (Danbolt & Hugo, forthcoming).

The following example is taken from a week when the letter T was the topic (picture 2). The children have brought their dictionaries back from home and are presenting them to their teacher in the withdrawal class. The “words of the week” (In Norwegian: Ukas ord) were tog (= train), troll, TV, tromme (= drum) and tre (= tree).<sup>6</sup>

Teacher: Let us see ... (looking in Belmina's book). Oh, tarabuka! Have you been talking about it at home, that this is called tarabuka?

Belmina (shaking her head): No. But Mummy wrote it.

Teacher: But have you heard the word tarabuka before? (Belmina is nodding eagerly.)

Teacher: But does tarabuka begin with the same sound as tromme? (Belmina is nodding.)

Teacher: Does it? Tromme – tarabuka? And (she is pointing in Sarah's book, where the word is written in Arabic, but also in Latin letters) Tabla! Which sound does it begin with, then?

The pupils (with support from the teacher): t-t-t-t



I would argue that the approach gives the teacher a possibility for attention to the students' home languages and for comparison between the languages. And in this example, by coincidence, the initial sounds of these words are the same, and this is highlighted by the teacher.

<sup>6</sup> The conversations took place in Norwegian and are transcribed from recordings.

To compare languages in this way, by translating from one language to another, is not always straight-forward. And the pictures, which are meant to be helpful, sometimes become confusing. This is illustrated through an interview with Belmina's parents, who have a Serbo-Croatian dialect as their home language. They have been discussing the word drum, based on the picture in the "dictionary".

Mother: Belmina didn't know what it [drum] was in our language, and we said 'It is tarabuka.' I think it is tarabuka.

Father: Same as tarabuka, but it is another playing instrument, same as this. 'cause we have little, like this (pointing towards a tambourine on a shelf) and we hold it here, like this, play like this. On the side (demonstrating how he can hold the tambourine). That is tarabuka.

The conversation illustrates the negotiation taking place connected to the clarification of the concepts. And it illustrates also the problem in choosing pictures for this purpose. Another example of the confusion felt by the parents becomes apparent through Linh's exclamation in the same teaching sequence described above:

Linh (interrupting): Teacher, teacher! You know what, know what, you know my mum didn't know what a troll was – is – don't know in Vietnamese

Teacher: You know what, I think she is quite right, Linh, because I don't think there are trolls in Vietnam. At least there are not such Norwegian trolls.

Belmina: Not in Norway either.

Teacher: Are you sure? Are there trolls?

Belmina: No (smiling and shaking her head).

Sarah: There are no trolls in Lebanon!

Belmina: There are no trolls in Serbo-Croatian.

The pupils have been told fairy tales and learned a song about trolls, so they were not unfamiliar with the concept. The illustration of the word is very typical of the Norwegian fairy tales, and as we can see, Linh's mother was stuck trying to find a translation based on this picture. Linh's exclamation is obviously a reflection of the conversation going on in Linh's home. And this reflection inspires the rest of the group to talk about the word.

These examples demonstrate clearly that the approach certainly has some pitfalls. The choice of pictures to illustrate the words can be seen as a typical representation of the traditional school literacy. However, in some ways the difficulties the parents face in translating the words can also be seen as fruitful, in the sense that the illustrations provoke a discussion of concepts and of differences between languages.

In this example from Sarah's workbook the bilingual nature of the approach becomes evident (picture 3). Not only does the task involve two different languages, Norwegian and Arabic, it also makes use of two different alphabetical systems, Latin and Arabic. We do not know in what sequence the different parts of the writing is done, but from the script it seems that Sarah has copied all the words in Norwegian, while Sarah's mother has written the Arabic script as well as the same words in Latin letters to accommodate the teacher. This procedure is also confirmed in the interview with Sarah's mother.



This example highlights the multilingual nature of the project, besides being an example of multilingualism as such. It illustrates also that the approach puts high demands on the language and literacy skills of the parent. Yet another aspect related to this example, is the potential benefit for the parent as well as the child. A very common attitude among immigrant parents is to give preference to the language of instruction. In an interview at the beginning of the project period, Sarah's mother said that she often had to use Norwegian words to explain things in Arabic to her children. Sarah was in other words on the verge of language loss (Baker 2001: 92; Schecter & Cummins 2003: 7).

How the project opens up glimpses into everyday literacy events became visible through an interview with Rahaf's parents. The father told us how he on a regular basis reads with his oldest child on the Internet, while the younger children watch them reading. This practice most probably arises from the lack of printed material in Somali, and the Internet is a source for texts written in Somali which is otherwise hard to find in ordinary libraries.

The project also revealed reflections of the parents' conception of school literacies. Through the interviews, it seemed as though they put more emphasis on the writing task than on the conversation about the words, which the teacher had encouraged them to do as a part of the activity. For instance, when Sarah's mother in the interview told how she and Sarah were working together with the dictionary, she said: "[I] write what she wants, then translate to Arabic, what it means". The same attitude is expressed by Linh's mother, commenting how she and Linh are working with the dictionary: "I write it [the words in Vietnamese], then Lihn looks at it, and then she writes".

### **Home and school literacy practices and mismatch explanations**

Parental involvement has a strong impact on children's attainment in early schooling (Desforges & Abouchaar 2007). Schools should therefore encourage parents to take part in activities that enhance literacy development. However, linguistic minority parents may feel discouraged in cases where they have little knowledge of the language of instruction. Besides, they may be unfamiliar with the literacy practices that are dominant in the everyday life of school. And vice versa: teachers may be unfamiliar with the conceptions of literacy that are there in the homes, and need to get insight into other than mainstream literacy practices, and appreciate the varied literacy experiences children bring to school. This is of great importance as the literacy experiences children get in their early childhood represent a foundation for their literacy development in early schooling (Heath 1983; Tabors et.al. 2001). These literacy experiences are reflections of the literacy practices that are embedded in the daily lives of their families (Barton 2007, Barton et.al. 2000), and may or may not resemble the literacy practices children encounter in school. Such mismatches between the nature and uses of literacy at home and at school have been stated as one cause of children's difficulties in literacy learning (Heath 1983, Baker 2003, Paratore 2002). Shirley Brice Heath's classical longitudinal ethnographic study of two working class communities in the Carolinas in the USA is one example of how children face difficulties in school. Their experiences of literacy in their homes were of little value when they started school. To put it in Heath's own words: "Roadville and Trackton residents have a variety of literate traditions, and in each community these are interwoven in different ways with oral uses of language, ways of negotiating meaning, deciding on action, and achieving status. [...]. Neither community's ways with the written word prepares it for the school's ways." (Heath 1983, pp 234-235).

Another example of the complex and sometimes difficult relations between home and school is Liz Brooker's research on immigrant families and working class families in a suburb in the UK and their interactions with school teachers (Brooker 2002). Brooker's finding is that the majority of the

immigrant parents did not really access and understand the practices of the school. The parents' conceptions of literacy and learning were neither seen nor acknowledged. And the teachers' conceptions were never made clear to the parents, leaving the families uncertain whether they were on the inside or on the margins of the school community.

As these examples show, there is need for better communication and cooperation between parents and teachers – or, to use a popular metaphor – to build bridges between home and school. However, in much traditional home-school cooperation, the traffic across the bridge often seems to go mainly in one direction, from the school to the home. The idea is that the home and the parents must learn the activities that are beneficial for their children's literacy development – from the school's point of view. There are numerous projects of this kind, where schools and teachers – with the best intentions – try to impose their views and values of literacy into the home. There are naturally very good reasons for giving the parents the knowledge and the tools to help their child develop good reading and writing skills – to mention one thing. But for parents of a linguistic minority background, it is not always straightforward to grasp the new concepts and practices that are given so much value in school. The expectations from the school are in general quite high, and when parents do not have good command of the language of instruction, they may feel helpless – or even excluded. When such problems arise, home and school are in danger of blaming one another due to the mismatch of expectations on both sides (Sample Gosse and Philips, 2007).

Baker (2003) also makes a point of the fact that the mismatch explanations of linguistic minority pupils' underachievement in school can be misused to impose the cultures for the majority's language and literacy practices. The school ought to be open and flexible in order to include the language and culture of bilingual pupils (op. cit. p. 298), in other words, to open the traffic in the other direction across the bridge between home and school. Barton (2007) describes the home an "an ecological niche in which literacy survives" (op. cit. p. 148). The school must be aware of the existence and character of literacy in the homes, to develop the knowledge as well as sensitivity towards a variety of literacy practices. So, schools and teachers need to broaden their perspective, because "[a]lthough mainstream literacy practices may be absent in many homes, there are other rich and varied literacy and language practices that are embedded in the fabric of children's daily lives" (Paratore 2002: 57).

To build bridges between home and school requires a deep understanding of literacy as such. A view of literacy which is restricted to and defined as acquisition of certain skills, will be too narrow to develop a solid foundation for home-school cooperation. Within socio-cultural theory, one is concerned with how the written language is used in natural situations in daily life. The core concept of literacy is used in a broad sense to embrace wider perspectives on reading and writing (Barton 2007: 19, Baynham 1995) and includes more than basic reading and writing skills. The concepts of "literacy practice" is an expression of how written language is a part of cultural patterns, and varies with social and cultural context, because it is situated within the social framework (see also Barton and Hamilton 1998). "Literacy event" describes events in daily life where written text plays a role (Barton 2007: 37). Literacy practices are not directly observable, but will lie under the specific choices and actions around the written language that is done on a daily basis. This distinction between literacy practice and literacy event is important to gain greater understanding of written language patterns in the home and interaction with the school's reading and writing practices.

This project, using home-made dictionaries to connect home and school, was initiated from the school. An objection towards the approach may be that the school literacy practice permeated the activities. However, it may be argued that the home-made dictionary established a literacy event in the home, where parent and child could discuss words and concepts in their home language, and

thus build a deeper understanding of languages and also enhance their language awareness. And when asking for translation of words into the home language, the school communicated interest, respect, and affirmation to the parents.

Some parents may not be informed about the influence the oral language has on the language and literacy development of their child. They may not be aware of the potential benefit of stimulating language awareness and vocabulary development in their home language. This was a topic in the meetings we had with the bilingual parents during the project period. Some of the parents said that they put more emphasis on the use of Norwegian at home, because they regarded the majority language as the only way to their children's success in the educational system. Too often, schools more or less consciously encourage such attitudes. Bilingual pupils' first languages are often treated with "benign neglect", and there is little opportunity to use it in the classroom (Cummins 2011: 9; Schecter & Cummins 2003: 6).

The challenge for teachers and educators is to come beyond talking about multilingualism in positive terms to some practical approaches teachers actually can turn to in the classroom. Several interesting projects of this kind are described by Schecter and Cummins (2003). Yet another example of a project connecting home and school literacies is "Rivers of Reading" (Winchester 2000), where the teacher asked parents to make a visual representation of all their reading material during one weekend. Also monolingual teachers can foster students' native literacies, e.g. by learning words and phrases in the students' first language (Schwartz 2007). In his view, "rich language experiences that are good for the regular language learning – (...) are also good for multi-literacy development" (op.cit).

Another objection towards the approach using the pupils' self-made dictionary can be the focus on single words taken out of their context. This may be regarded as a rather simplistic method. However, there are some good reasons for focusing on individual words in early literacy learning. Duke and Purcell-Gates put together data from two studies to compare common genres across settings. They found individual words to be a genre that was found both within school and the home (Duke & Purcell-Gates 2003:34). Labelling is mentioned by Barton as "a common language activity which [is] intertwined with literacy" and a common activit[y] both in the home and in school (Barton 2007: 180). In this way, individual words can be seen as an appropriate choice for dual language activities for young learners.

It may be argued that this project used a rather simple approach to home and school cooperation. However, the strength of the program lies in the inclusion of the home language as a resource for the teacher and the children – as well as their peers. The teacher did not ask for something that the parents did not possess – on the contrary, the parents realised that their competence and knowledge of their own language represented an asset for their child. The values underpinning the project were acceptance, acknowledgement, and empowerment, and in this sense, the bridge between home and school was open in both directions.

To actually take different languages into account in developing literacy and linguistic awareness is certainly demanding, and takes a lot of knowledge and effort from the teacher. Teachers should be encouraged to look upon multilingualism as a linguistic treasure. Based on the knowledge of the importance of parental involvement, it is necessary to find ways to include parents of bilingual pupils in ways that build on their competencies. The concept of multi-literacy is very useful in this regard. It is important for teachers to discover – and uncover - the literacy practices



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## **Journeys into Culturally Responsive Teaching**

**Julie McAdam and Evelyn Arizpe,**

*University of Glasgow*

**Contact e-mail address: [Julie.E.McAdam@glasgow.ac.uk](mailto:Julie.E.McAdam@glasgow.ac.uk)**

The profile of children attending Scottish schools is diverse: over 147 languages have been recorded as home languages of children in schools; in urban Local Authorities such as Glasgow, approximately 15% of young people use English as an Additional Language (EAL). A review of recent Scottish educational policy related to teaching and initial teacher education (Menter et al., 2010) firmly establishes a shared vision of a teaching profession that focuses on inclusion, equality and sharing of Scottish values. However the recent government report, *Count Us In: Meeting the Needs of Children and Young People Newly Arrived in Scotland*, notes that although most schools have developed a positive climate of equality, care and support, teachers are not always fully aware of the potential emotional, social and educational difficulties which newly-arrived children and their families may experience in the transition to a new country or school (HMIE, 2009: iv). The report also notes that many teachers do not feel confident in addressing the language needs of this group of children.

This paper explores, through the use of narrative enquiry, the responses of three diverse Scottish teachers involved in the work of an international research project: *Visual Journeys* (referred to subsequently as the VJ project) and addresses the question of how Scottish educators can meet the needs of the diverse learners that make up the fabric of Scottish society. The VJ project explored how immigrant and Scottish children constructed meaning from visual images in contemporary wordless picturebooks, developed their visual literacy skills and created communities of critical readers that allowed them to reflect on their own or others' experiences of migration, journeys and foreign worlds. Although the pupils and their responses to the wordless books were the focus of the project the research team also sought to capture the teachers' responses to the learning strategies used throughout the project, subsequently reported and analysed within this paper.

The project ran simultaneously in Scotland, Spain, the USA and Australia and each team is now involved in writing up the project data (Arizpe, 2010; Farrell, Arizpe & McAdam, 2010; Martínez-Roldán & Newcomer, 2011). Each research team worked with groups of 10-12 year old children, most of whom belonged to minority ethnic communities (in Scotland and Spain groups of New Arrival children worked with first language speakers in some of the groupings), who had recently migrated, either as children of refugees, asylum seekers or migrant workers. All of these children had had their primary education interrupted by a 'journey' or 'journeys' from their country of origin to the country in which they were living at the time of their participation in the project. Throughout this paper we will use the term 'New Arrivals' to describe the children involved in the project, but note that throughout the literature in this field other terms such as 'immigrant child' (Igoa, 1995) or 'students from diverse cultural background' (Nieto, 2010) are used to describe children.

### **The texts and interactive strategies used**

The award-winning picturebooks chosen for the project were *Flotsam* by David Wiesner (2006) and *The Arrival* by Shaun Tan (2007). Both are complex narratives that could be used with a variety of age groups, but without words to guide the reader, both highly detailed texts required careful looking in order to decode visual signs, construct sequences and generate hypotheses that would be

confirmed or redefined as the reading progressed (Arizpe and Styles, 2002). The strategies<sup>7</sup> used were designed to provide opportunities for the children to enjoy the texts and encourage critical literacy skills for reading, such as analysing and interpreting. The strategies used were:

- A 'walk-through' of the picturebook with questions and discussion time
- The use of annotated spreads – This involved providing the children with the opportunity to look closely at one particular image and comment on it with their own words, providing us with a glimpse into their thought processes as they 'read' the picture. The research team selected images that were crucial to understanding the narrative and the children were invited to select images that they were personally interested in. The images were pasted on A3 sheets and children wrote in the margins, drawing arrows to reference their comments.
- The use of photographs – In *Flotsam*, the main character finds a camera washed upon the beach, the pictures within the text depict real and imagined photographs taken by the camera as it moves through the sea. Developing this theme we invited the children to imagine that they had found the camera and asked them to take pictures of objects/events that were important in their lives. The children presented these pictures and talked to the group about their significance.
- The use of graphic strips – Both picturebooks made use of strip formats, in particular, *The Arrival* made use of these to depict sub plots within the main narrative. We invited the children to pick a graphic strip layout and depict their own short story of a journey that they had been on. Each child was invited to talk through their graphic strip and answer questions about the story and the design features they had used.

### **Re-storying the teachers' journeys**

The participants interviewed were either directly involved in working with the EAL children involved in the VJ project or had been included in professional development sessions based on the aims and outcomes of the VJ project. Two of the teachers, Haile and Jennifer worked specifically with EAL children in small groups withdrawing them from the class for additional support or providing support within the main class. Both these teachers had intimate knowledge of the children, their backgrounds and their families.

Following a professional development session within a Scottish school the opportunity arose to interview Dougie, a teacher of a mainstream P6 class. He was drawn to the potential of using the texts as means of engaging children in his class who had disengaged from the reading process. In his subsequent role as a Development Officer within a Scottish Local Authority, with a remit to promote internationalism and Literacy, he promoted the visual aspects of the texts and worked with schools wishing to instigate projects focussed on this potential.

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<sup>7</sup> In order to develop the strategies used in this project the authors have been involved in a follow up project sponsored by the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, which aims to evaluate the potential of using these culturally responsive strategies to promote critical reading in Upper Year Primary classrooms. Initial evaluation results have been positive.

The following table summarises the three diverse teachers whose stories and interviews have been analysed and re-written as research narratives. All names used in this paper are pseudonyms and have been approved by the participants.

Name	Experience as a teacher
Jennifer Finlay (JF)	EAL specialist in Glasgow School Scottish ethnic origin
Haile Belay (HB)	EAL specialist in Glasgow School Non Scottish ethnic origin, Multilingual speaker.
Dougie McArchie (DMcA)	P6 teacher in central Scottish Local Authority. Seconded as Development Officer. Irish ethnic origin

Narrative enquiry is about the use of story in our lives, how we tell stories to shape our lives and how, in turn, stories shape our lives. For the purposes of this paper narrative enquiry will be defined as ‘... a way of understanding experience. ... a collaboration between researcher and participants, over time, in a place or series of places, and in social interaction with milieus’ (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000:20). This definition is helpful in that it allows the researcher to collect and interpret narratives at the individual level of experience while considering the wider social and political influences on the process. Connelly and Clandinin refer to this writing process as one of broadening, burrowing and re-storying (1990:11). Narrative enquirers can call upon a rich repertoire of data collection tools, sometimes known as field records (Connelly and Clandinin, 1990, Clandinin and Connelly, 2000). For the purpose of this small scale study we used two tools, interview sessions and a personal research journal that allowed us to record our thoughts, ideas, and questions after each meeting with the teachers and the children.

Emerging from the teacher interviews were four clear narratives, the first narrative was constructed from the positive evaluations and reactions to the strategies used in the project and has been titled, ‘*The value of active learning*’. The second narrative entitled, ‘*Journeys from home to school*’ explores the ways in which teachers build on the children’s previous learning and experience and includes an understanding of the ways in which teachers incorporate home language and literacy practices within school contexts. The third narrative, ‘*Explorations of culture and identity*’ is less explicit and teases out the ways in which the children use the texts to explore their own cultural identities. This narrative also touches on the ways in which teachers can facilitate these complex dialogues within their own classrooms. The last narrative is concerned with the ways in which teachers can make sense of the underlying pedagogies that inform the strategies and therefore make use of them within their classrooms, this narrative is entitled, ‘*Ways forward*’.

### **The Value of Active Learning**

All the teachers interviewed noted that the books had engaged the children in the reading process even before it was discussed or used in sessions. Haile speaking of *The Arrival* said, ‘*this book seems to surpass a lot of texts that I have used because when the children have picture books they’ve got ideas of their own, which they can talk to ...*’ (HB:2). Dougie left copies of the book in his classroom until they caught the children’s attention, before he knew it, children who had actively voiced a dislike for reading were coming up, tugging his shirt and saying, ‘*look what I have found in this book*’ (DMcA:11).

Within the project the researchers enabled the children to build critical reading communities by planning several 45 minute sessions ‘walking through’ the book. Reflecting on this Jennifer felt she would have spent less time discussing the individual pages because of time constraints and because

she assumed the 'walk-through' would not hold the attention of the children, however she commented, *'I was quite surprised about how they were very keen on it and they seem to stay very focussed on it (the discussion), maybe being a small group helped, maybe not if they had been in a large class.'* (JF:4). In contrast Haile wanted to spend more time on every page, allowing these small group discussions to become Paulo Friere styled community language building sessions, where the context of each page would allow children to build their own vocabularies, *'...they can talk using the sorts of words that are specific to the pages'* (HB:6).

All of the teachers involved were excited at the freedom the wordless texts offered the children. Responding to the books gave the children confidence in themselves as readers who responded and made meaning of texts. The books did not have to be read like a normal chapter book, Haile commented that *'the children's reading habits are freed up, they are not constrained in moving through the book in order, they are free to move backwards and forwards'* (HB:2). Jennifer also echoed these comments focusing on the way the texts did not impose ideas on the children, *'it's about them interpreting a story and that's like higher order reading skills ... when you are looking at something and it's not literal, it's evaluative...'* (JF:10). Jennifer was cautious that in reading with children, there is often an emphasis on an outcome, getting to the end of the book, the meaning of the book, a common understanding of the text or simply the answer and that less time is actually spent in thinking about the process of making meaning. While the teachers involved in the project were able to appreciate the value of allowing small group guided reading as a worthwhile classroom practice that promotes critical reading, they did voice concerns on a practical level about determining how much time to spend on such tasks as well as how to orchestrate such groups within the class. Jennifer concluded her reflections by wondering if there were enough opportunities in school settings to allow children to develop higher order reading skills.

As researchers we were aware of the need to use data collection tools that encouraged the higher order thinking skills discussed above. The annotation tasks were viewed as another means of inviting the children to respond to the text and explore their own ideas, reactions, constructions of what was happening within the picturebook narrative. Haile valued these and saw that they could be applied to print based texts and used by children, who struggle to speak, *'or don't wish to speak, they also allow children to work with their peers speaking their home language or work in groups to socially construct meaning'* (HB:7). Dougie found that they were useful for children who struggled with writing, *'because to them it feels like notes, a quick response, they can get on with the thinking and the responding, not tying their efforts up in writing whole sentences as in standard style comprehensions'* (DMcA:8). Haile echoed these thoughts when he spoke about the graphic strips, *'they are good guidance, better than just words'* (HB:7).

In summing up the texts used in the project, Jennifer says, *'it's active learning as well, you are interacting with these texts, you're not just being fed something, ...you have to think about it and bring something to the page, rather than sitting there passively and being told this is what this book is about...'* (JF:11). This is crucial to the reading process, what we bring with us in terms of our previous literacy experiences and life experiences can be the key to unlocking a text for a child. Jennifer fears that all too often the focus for children reading is about *'...being told that this is what the book is about...'* (JF:11). Cummins wrote of the need for educators to engage in genuine dialogue and collaboration in diverse classrooms, and argued for the use of 'pedagogical approaches that empower students' allowing them to 'assume greater control over setting their own learning goals and to collaborate actively with one another in achieving these goals.' (2010:667). The teachers participating in this project had a clear sense of the pedagogical value that these wordless picturebooks brought to their classrooms. They enabled the children to participate in the critical

reading discussions and they enabled multiple interpretations that drew upon the children's 'funds of knowledge' (Moll et al, 1992).

The next narrative begins to unlock the value teachers place on making links to previous experience as well as the ways in which this is done.

### **Journeys from Home to School**

Haile raises a very important point about the children he works with, and that is recognising the previous experience that children bring with them in regard to using texts. He recalls working with a boy called Josef, from Poland, who was an avid reader in Polish, especially of the Harry Potter series, *'Josef reads in Polish, I didn't have to teach him to read, he knew how to read, but if children come here without any literacy skills, even in their first language, then you have to teach them not just the new vocabulary in context but the skills that allow them to access the text'* (HB:4). So for Haile it is very important to find out about the children's literacy skills in their first language, *'the first thing I do is find out what languages they speak, how those languages work, does the script move from right to left like Arabic, or left to right like Polish, what the child can say in English and then we start from there'* (HB:5). Gaining insight and knowledge of children's home literacy practices allows teachers to begin the assessment process and make key decisions about their development needs. DCSF (2007:18) suggests that we find sensitive ways to carry out these assessments, 'taking care to avoid stress', finding culturally responsive ways to gain these insights can be challenging and time consuming for teachers.

Haile invites the parents of the children into the school about two to three times a year so that he can explain to the parents how he supports the children's learning in small groups. He also talks to the parents about the importance of the first language and the need to continue to use it at home, *'if they forget the first language, the language that they use to understand their environment then it's very difficult to replace it with another language. So I recommend that they keep teaching it, send them to the Mosque to learn how to read and write and also give them books. I show them some bilingual books and they take them home to read'* (HB:4). He is in touch with recent UK policy on bilingualism, the DCSF report (2007:10) clearly states that children 'need to have their bilingualism (and sometimes multilingualism) recognised as a positive part of their intellectual development and they need opportunities to use their home language to support their learning and development of English.' Haile also works with parents to communicate the value of bilingualism in the child's cognitive development.

Both the EAL teachers encouraged a close relationship between home and school and actively looked for ways to extend the relationship. Both felt the wordless picturebooks provided a means for the parents to get involved in the reading process. Jennifer wished that she could have had more feedback from the parents in terms of *'what it was like to share a book like that with them (their children) rather than with words,'* (JF:5). She acknowledged the practice of sending reading books home with children and the ways in which this could be daunting for some parents. The wordless texts would circumvent this tension and allow any dialogue around the book to happen in more than one language. She expressed a desire to be able to videotape shared readings at home as a means for class teachers to find out more about how books were used in the home environment. While using video cameras may be a somewhat impractical means of gaining insights into home literacy practices the idea of using still cameras with the children worked well within the VJ project. This strategy built on the work of Moss (2001) which examined children's literacy practices at home through photographs, but differed in that it embedded the task into a relevant learning context thereby providing insights into home literacy practices that were less intrusive.

One of the purposes of inviting the children in the VJ project to use cameras to take photographs of objects, people and places that were important to them in their lives was to encourage the children to talk about aspects of their home life. They were invited to emulate the main character in the picturebook *Flotsam*, who discovered a series of photographs taken by other people before he took a shot and threw the camera back into the sea. The children used this task as a bridge (Moll et al, 1992) between home and school, speaking (another area of divergence from Moss) about the photographs in their home languages at home and in English at school, providing insights through their talk for the teacher of home literacy practices within the context of responding to the text. Both Haile and Jennifer commented on how much the children enjoyed this activity and picked up on the potential community building aspects of the task, *'it helped the children learn a lot about each other, which they wouldn't be able to otherwise, they were very interested in each other's presentations of the photographs'* (JF:12). This sharing of knowledge related to culture means that not only do the teachers gain a sense of the children's identities outside of school, but the children also begin to appreciate and gain knowledge of each others' cultural identities. Using the texts and tasks on the theme of migration means that teachers are situating the learning within a cultural context that is meaningful to the children; in addition they are opening up the possibilities for teachers and children to gain knowledge and skills that *'counteract cultural ignorance, racial oppression and cultural hegemony.'* (Gay, 2010:165). These discussions are further explored in the following narrative.

### **Narratives of Migration: Explorations of Culture and Identity**

While educational policy has developed and responded to the current population trends in a sensitive and worthwhile manner, an analysis of the emerging discourse shows that policy directly related to New Arrival children has little to say about the culture and identity of these children. If we work from the theoretical perspective that language and culture are intertwined (Gee, 1990), then teachers need to embrace the complexity of the relationship between who these children are and what these children say, finding sensitive ways to confidently encompass this talk within their classrooms. Every New Arrival child has a personal narrative of who they are, why they live in Glasgow as well as their journey to be here. Some children are very forthright about their stories others are more wary. Emerging from the teachers interviewed was an awareness of the children's narratives of migration as well as an understanding of how best to work with these children in classroom settings.

Jennifer reflected that *'we decided that we might have got more about their own experiences if it had just been the New Arrival children, they were a bit reticent in front of others'* (JF:7). Igoa (1995) in a discussion of her own work with immigrant children suggests that New Arrival children may hold back talking about their own experiences, when facing *'pressure to assimilate into the new culture'*. (1995:44). The child feels a need to become part of the mainstream culture suppressing their own language, past and identity. Children can learn that if they reveal their own backgrounds they can face ridicule or insensitive questioning, thus many choose to hide these aspects of their identity. Within the VJ project this seemed even more pertinent for asylum seeking children, Jennifer recalled how one of the children had clammed up, *'the children are not sure how much they should be saying ... because of all the secrecy around their personal journeys and having to keep things quiet and secret, you can understand it'* (JF:7).

The teachers could see the ways in which the different children spoke about themselves, and how they differentiated their migrant status amongst themselves. Haile recollected how one child called Sara was very clear about where she came from; she told a well rehearsed story about her move to the UK, including a traumatic separation from her parents while she was a baby. Sara's family have been granted leave to remain in the UK and Sara explained to the researchers that she was no longer

a refugee. This was in contrast to another child, Hassan, who never shared his story. Haile explains, *'Hassan is the same as Sara, but he wouldn't share his story because of the stigma attached to being an Asylum Seeker, the children are not at will to say that.'* (HB:11). He continued, *'there is a big stigma attached to being an Asylum Seeker, in the city Asylum Seekers have been attacked, killed, faced demonstrations against them. The children want to feel safe and in comfort from these problems, so they say nothing to do with me.'* (HB:11, cont). It is this very notion of safety and trust that I wish to highlight in my concluding thoughts. Haile and Jennifer spoke of the ways in which the project had allowed the children to speak about issues never discussed before in a social setting, Haile concluded that *'the reason the children like coming into my room is they are free to say things and talk'* (HB:12). This sensitivity to the needs of the children is essential in order to create safe spaces within school, spaces where the children can explore the various dimensions of their cultural and linguistic identities at their own pace.

### **Ways Forward: Making the strategies their own**

This final narrative shows that the Scottish teachers interviewed in this project were willing and able to meet the needs of New Arrival children as well as children who struggle with reading print based texts. They could all see the future possibilities of making use of visual texts as well as thinking about the underlying pedagogy that informs the way they teach literacy.

Dougie is planning to make use of visual texts by incorporating them into the range of texts he uses each term, *'I would incorporate them into a reading programme, they would stretch secure readers and for children who were less secure or consolidating their skills, they are a great way to build confidence'* (DMcA:9). He reflected that the first time he used the picturebooks he did not structure the learning, *'I just kept a couple of copies of the book in the class and I just let the kids walk by them until they caught their attention, I wanted them to feel that they had discovered the book and that they could lead the learning'* (DMcA:2). Seven male children within his mainstream class opted to work with the two picturebooks and made their own choices about how to work with the book. Drawing on previous classroom work with radio screenplays, *'they decided they were going to take a page each (The Shaun Tan book is good because it has web sources to back up the book.) and I printed them off and they agreed to take them home and bring them back on Friday'* (DMcA:3). He found that when they returned they had written out the text to accompany the visual from different perspectives. Not all the children were drawn towards responding in writing, another smaller group of boys were more drawn towards the brighter colours of *Flotsam*. They spent more listening and talking, *'two of the boys who were using Flotsam would not normally go near a book in school, a comic maybe, ... take the words out of the equation and don't pressurise them to write anything and these books can be used with kids who don't normally engage'* (DMcA:6). Picking up on this potential Dougie plans to structure the learning the next time he uses the books in his class. Teachers are drawn to the texts, but like Dougie they sense an uncertainty on how to build them into their textual repertoires, even after attending professional development sessions on using the texts. Having validated his own ideas about the value of the text by watching his children respond, Dougie feels far more confident about implementing the strategies in a more structured way next time around.

Haile was drawn to the importance of the visual in the reading process, *'the picture is one of the main instruments of understanding the content of the story'* (HB:9). He was also aware of the children using the texts to begin building up a vocabulary of terms used to describe the visual elements of text, *'terms such as perspective and zoom, angle and tone'* (HB:10). Jennifer was also drawn to the visual elements of the texts and has been considering the use of graphic novels in her own classroom, *'it's quite difficult to find a book for the children I teach, that is going to be relevant and appropriate for them, because many books can be too young in content. I think things*



*need to be very visual for bilingual learners'*. (JF:2) She has been ordering graphic novels for the school library and inviting the children to get involved in selecting texts for the classroom. Dougie has been promoting the use of visual texts in his post as a Development Officer, and Haile has become involved in a second research project looking at the ways in which the VJ strategies can be used within mainstream classrooms.

### **Conclusion**

Jennifer, Haile, and Dougie are extended professionals, (Cremin, 2009) teachers who are confident enough to translate critical reading pedagogies into journeys of learning to suit the children in their own classrooms. They were confident in their abilities to read the children (Friere, 1998) and create safe spaces for them to develop within their classrooms and allowing them to use their existing interests and strengths to bridge learning gaps. They welcomed participating in the VJ project or the subsequently run CPD. They all had the confidence to respond to the strategies, they knew their children, and they could see the importance of allowing spaces within their classrooms for children to safely explore aspects of their identities.

Children cross borders on a daily basis, moving from home to school, moving from one language to another, transforming and negotiating their identities to meet the contexts in which they find themselves. As Scotland's diverse population continues to grow, teacher education needs to consider the ways in which it can diversify entry routes into the workforce as well as transform pre-service teachers into confident extended professionals who can respond culturally to the needs of the children within their classrooms. Educators need to consider the following questions in relation to preparing pre-service teachers for the 21<sup>st</sup> century and beyond:-

- How do teachers begin to facilitate or mediate these border crossings for children?
- How do they help these children construct 'hybrid identities' (Nieto, 2010:78) that will allow them to bridge cultural and linguistic contexts?
- How will they actively encourage these children to imagine their futures?

Teachers need to respond to children in culturally appropriate ways, and take on the role of being cultural mediators (Nieto, 2010:99), ensuring that the cultural capital of the dominant culture is not the only one being valued in the classroom. There needs to be a greater emphasis on practitioner enquiry and a commitment of teachers to cross their own familiar borders to embrace diversity (Pugach, 2009). Teachers need to be clear about the socio-political context of culture and that language cannot be separated from culture. They need to know about their own social, political, historical and cultural backgrounds and how these backgrounds influence their own identities as teachers. These narratives show us that teachers know about their students, but what do they know about themselves? These points are nothing new, Cummins (2001:653) in his introduction to the re-publication of his seminal paper (originally published in 1986) draws on the idea of the visual, of the need for teachers to engage in the 'sketching of a triangular set of images':

- an image of our own identities as educators
- an image of the identity options we highlight for our students
- an image of the society we hope our students will help form.

During the opening months of 2011, we were surrounded by visual images showing the transformation of Arabic speaking nations. Young people have clearly shown their sophisticated use of multimedia to create new futures for their selves and their nations. As we enter a new era of possibility, never has the need been so pressing for reviewing our shared purpose and vision as educators. Teacher education needs to embrace the discourse of transformation now and seriously

consider how the profession reflects the diverse society in which we live (Smyth et al, 2011). Our literacy practices need to echo those of the local and global communities where we live and work, we need greater convergence in literacy practices between home and school and children need to know how to participate in these local and global communities. There are new images out there, images that represent change and challenge of oppression, images that invite us all, teachers and learners, to be part of a journey into our collective future.

If you wish to know more about the project or future professional development please contact:  
[Julie.E.McAdam@glasgow.ac.uk](mailto:Julie.E.McAdam@glasgow.ac.uk)  
[Evelyn.Arizpe@glasgow.ac.uk](mailto:Evelyn.Arizpe@glasgow.ac.uk)

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## **The Multicultural Kindergarten in rural areas in Norway - a good place for learning and participation for all children?**

**Camilla Eline Andersen and Sigrun Sand**

*Hedmark University College, Norway*

**Contact e-mail address: [camilla.andersen@hihm.no](mailto:camilla.andersen@hihm.no)**

### **Abstract**

In this article we present a selection of results from a survey conducted in kindergartens in Norway in 7 rural counties. Our main purpose is to discuss what conditions for learning and participation for children from linguistic and cultural minorities, based on the reported answers from the respondents, which seems to exist in rural kindergartens. The respondents are 525 pedagogical leaders and 288 head teachers. These were asked about various topics and pedagogical practices related to how they worked with children and families from linguistic and cultural minorities in their institutions. Our findings show that most of the kindergartens in the survey to a low degree meet the cultural and linguistic diversity in a satisfactory way in line with the National framework plan. Further, the results show that very few of the professionals in these kindergartens hold formal qualifications regarding linguistic, cultural and religious diversity. We end the article with some reflections around the responsibilities politicians and institutions providing preschool teacher education might have in these matters.

### **Introduction**

Contemporary policies guiding education are increasingly dealing with issues of cultural, religious and linguistic diversity. This is also true for the field of early childhood education globally and locally. In this article the focus is on how these issues are practiced in kindergartens in rural municipalities in Norway, and how reported practices from a survey can be understood. We base this research paper on a survey that was carried out in kindergartens in rural areas in Norway 2009, and where pedagogical leaders and head teachers of kindergartens were the respondents<sup>8</sup>. The data from this survey provide knowledge of how kindergartens work with a diverse group of children, and thus a ground from which to critically plan future educational policies for the field of early childhood education in a multicultural society. For clarification, a multicultural kindergarten was defined in the survey as a kindergarten where children from linguistic and cultural minorities attend.

A rural area was defined in the survey as a municipality with 40 000 or less inhabitants. Only 18 out of a total of 430 municipalities in Norway do not fit within this definition of rural. Hence a rural context, following this definition, includes quite large areas and parts of the population in Norway. It can be argued that rural areas provide different contexts in which to act on and think through the realms of a multicultural society. Most of the research in Norway regarding what is often named "multicultural kindergartens" has however been carried out in urban contexts, and very little is known about how teacher professionals practice multicultural pedagogy outside these relatively

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<sup>8</sup> All kindergartens in Norway shall have a head teacher, who, together with the pedagogical leaders, is responsible for the quality of the pedagogical education. Both head teachers are expected to have a bachelor's degree in Early Childhood Education, and pedagogical leaders must by law hold such a degree. Dispensations may be given due to the lack of applicants for such positions, especially in more rural areas. About half of the kindergartens in Norway have private owners. These regulations and conditions are also applicable for them.

urban districts. We question the potential of generalisation from research conducted in the larger cities where, for example, the population is much more diverse in terms of immigration and the possibilities this might give.

If we follow this argumentation it seems necessary to explore how preschool teachers<sup>9</sup> in both urban *and* rural geographical places, with particular local demographic conditions, work to offer all children and their families the same opportunities for participation and learning. This paper thus aims at filling parts of the knowledge gap concerning multicultural kindergartens in rural areas in Norway. Except for surveys evaluating how kindergartens make use of grants for minority language support and how a five year long national competence program has affected how preschool teachers work with language stimulation for linguistic minority children (Ministry of Education and Research<sup>10</sup>, 2006, 2010) national surveys focusing on multicultural practices in rural areas have not been carried out.

To be more specific about the issues discussed, we use the survey data to explore how kindergartens in rural areas report working to reflect *cultural diversity* and how they deal with *multilingualism*. Both of these themes are emphasised in the National Framework Plan for kindergartens as part of the institutions' social mandate (MER, 2006a). Before outlining the study in more detail, we provide some background details on the context in which teachers' professionalism operates in Norway. Following this, key themes arising from the study are presented. Here we also introduce theoretical perspectives which we use when analysing these findings. Finally, the paper discusses implications the reported practices may have for children in multicultural kindergartens and for future preschool teacher professionalism.

### **Some facts about the immigrant population in Norway and immigrant policy regulations**

Immigrants and people born in Norway to immigrant parents constitute about 552 000 persons or 11.4 per cent of Norway's population which recently was 4 908 100<sup>11</sup>. In 2010, 68 per cent of all children between the ages of 1-5 categorised as 'from linguistic and cultural minorities' attended kindergarten (Statistics Norway, 2010a). This group make up 9% of all children in kindergartens, and is a growth of 14 % since 2005. If we break down the statistics and just look at the share of children from linguistic and cultural minorities aged four and five, the percentage is more than 90 (NOU, 2010, p. 94).

Further, we will provide some figures relevant for understanding conditions in rural areas. Due to the national integration policies, preschool teachers all over the country are most likely already working with, or have recently worked with, or will soon work with, diverse cultural and linguistic groups of children. This is the result of how the Government conducts immigration policy regulations regarding the establishments for immigrants, which in practice means that there are immigrants in all the 430 municipalities. Yet there are great variances between municipalities regarding how many students or pupils? from minority backgrounds attend the various institutions (NOU, 2010). Statistics show that above 50 % of all immigrants and people born in Norway to immigrant parents are living in one of the three largest cities. To exemplify the effects of a scattering of immigrants in a country that mainly consists of rural areas, it is reported that only 5 % of all immigrants and people born in Norway to immigrant parents live in the north of Norway

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<sup>9</sup> In this paper we use preschool teachers, pedagogues and pedagogical leaders when speaking of personnel with a bachelor's degree in Early Childhood Education and/or staff holding such a position.

<sup>10</sup> From now we use MER as an acronym

<sup>11</sup> October 1. 2010 (Statistics Norway, [http://www.ssb.no/english/subjects/02/befolkning\\_en/](http://www.ssb.no/english/subjects/02/befolkning_en/)).

which includes three of 19 counties (NOU 2010:7, p. 32). These numbers are also evident in the survey-data where the kindergartens report that the numbers of children from linguistic and cultural minorities attending their institution are quite low (one to three children in each kindergarten).

### **Early childhood pedagogy in a complex multicultural context**

Kindergartens in Norway are pedagogical institutions for children aged 0-5 that comprise care, upbringing, play and learning. The responsibility on a political level is held by the Ministry of Education and Research. 88.5 per cent of all preschool children aged 1-5 attended kindergartens in 2009 (Statistics Norway, 2010a). When looking at the political scenery of early childhood in Norway during the last ten to fifteen years, there have been several upheavals which affect the everyday life of families with young children and early childhood professionals. In short, various policies and strategies have been implemented. Listed here are a few of the more significant changes that have been implemented: the introduction of a Framework Plan, implementation of a cash-for-care benefit reform, lowering the age of school entry from seven to six, a shift in responsibility from Ministry of Children and Family Affairs to Ministry of Education and Research, implementation of maximum prices for children in kindergartens, the institution of a legal right for all children aged 1-5 to a place in kindergarten, and kindergartens' responsibility to contribute to social equalization<sup>12</sup>.

At the moment the Government is focusing on *quality work* and one of the three goals that has been formulated to assure quality work is: 'all children should participate in an inclusive community' (MER, 2009). The focus has thus shifted from organizational matters to more content matters. We read the goal of participation in an inclusive community as a follow-up of recent main educational policies which explicitly emphasize the importance of working towards equity, participation and inclusion for all in a cultural, religious and linguistic diverse society (MER, 2006c, 2007). Similar requests can be found in the Framework Plan for the Content and Tasks of Kindergartens (MER, 2006a). It is stated here that cultural diversity in Norwegian society shall be reflected in the day care institutions (p. 7). The background for these demands is that

the Norwegian society is far more diverse than it was in the past. There are now many ways of being Norwegian. ... This cultural diversity shall be reflected in kindergartens. Social, ethnic, cultural, religious, linguistic and economic differences in the population mean that children come to kindergarten with different experiences. Kindergarten shall support children on the basis of their own cultural and individual circumstances (p. 5).

And following this, 'kindergartens shall... help to ensure social equality [and they] ...have a responsibility in society for the early prevention of discrimination...' (p. 5).

In other words, it is clear that policy documents informing early childhood education pedagogues and teacher educators emphasise diversity in terms of culture, language and religion as something

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<sup>12</sup> Some of these implementations have caused discussions that are relevant to get a bigger picture of prevailing discourses circulating within early childhood education in multicultural Norway. To provide one example, the opponents of the cash-for-care benefit reform, were critical of what effects this would have for 'poor immigrant families' and how this might discourage them to enroll their children in day care centers. They also expressed their worries on how cash-benefit might 'impede the integration of new immigrants' (Guldbrandsen, 2009, p.18). The current government however argued that this benefit scheme gave parents a possibility to spend more time with their children, an argument that supports the principle of 'freedom of choice'. Thus from 1998, those parents who do not make use of publicly funded day care, are offered an amount equal to the average state outlay on subsidizing a place at a day care institution (Guldbrandsen, 2009). In 2010, this amount was 3 303 Norwegian kroner each month. Parents can combine cash benefit with reduced time in public daycare. Full time is 33 hours each week or more (NAV, 2010).

that must affect the content and ways of doing pedagogy. Our readings of the above referred to documents is that they depict a vision of kindergartens that, despite a wide range in children's and families' social, cultural and ethnic backgrounds, give all children equal opportunities for learning and participation. All children's home language practices and all children's cultural and ethnic backgrounds seem to be supported and part of the pedagogical practices. We could critique this vision as lacking aspects of power, history, complexity and more, and we also do that elsewhere (Andersen, 2002; Sand, 2008). The interest in this paper is, however, if and how these visions are reported to be worked with by pedagogues in kindergartens in rural areas. Later in the paper we will return to this as we discuss the reported practices from institutions situated in rural contexts. There we particularly look at how cultural diversity is reflected within these sites and the space multilingualism seems to be given. There are numerous discussions within the local context of our writings regarding what concepts seem useful within the field of multicultural early childhood education (Andersen, 2002; Gjervan, Andersen & Bleka, 2006). Being aware of these ongoing and important conceptual discussions, we nevertheless use *children from linguistic and cultural minorities* when we refer throughout the paper to reported practices with the given group of children that the survey focused on<sup>13</sup>. This correlates with other educational documents' use of concepts. Most commonly, children from linguistic and cultural minorities includes children who speak another mother-tongue than Norwegian, Sami, Swedish, Danish and/or English (MER, 2007, p. 7). This same definition was used on the cover note of the survey given to the respondents.

When we focus later in the paper more closely on linguistic practices in kindergartens we find it useful to add another concept, that of 'emergent bilingual learners' (García, 2009, p. 397), which includes bilingual learners 'in the beginning stages of moving along a bilingual continuum' (p. 397). We like this wording as it can make concepts such as 'children from linguistic minorities' unstable and break down the idea of a dualistic understanding of knowing more than one language. The majority of the world's population speaks more than two languages on a daily basis, and in use they are most likely intertwined. We also resist the concept of 'mother tongue' which is used in the framework plan, and instead again follow García who prefers 'home language practices' (2009, p. 58). The latter allows for a flourishing of languages as part of people's everyday life at home (and beyond) without having to favour one or even separating them. We use the term *home language* when home languages are practiced within institutional spaces.

### **Methodological and theoretical approach**

As pointed out earlier, most of the existing knowledge and textualized experiences from multicultural kindergartens comes from urban contexts. Due to the national history and the politics of immigration in Norway, there are however large differences between who 'immigrants' in rural and urban areas can be said to be. There are differences in terms of both numbers and reasons for having transnational experiences (refugees, working immigrants, family-reunions, Norwegian-born by foreign-born parents etc.)<sup>14</sup>. There are also differences between urban and rural areas when it

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<sup>13</sup> This categorization follows dominant official practices. E.g. *Statistics Norway* use *children from linguistic and cultural minorities* when they speak of children who speak another mother-tongue than Norwegian, Sami, Swedish, Danish and/or English (Statistics Norway, 2010a).

<sup>14</sup> Recently, Statistics Norway has worked to change several of their concepts when dealing with statistics regarding people with immigrant backgrounds. As a result of this, 'an immigrant' or 'immigrants' now includes people who have migrated to Norway. The Norwegian concept is *innvandrere* (inn= in, vandrere=wanderer) and it now literally includes a person who has 'wandered' in to Norway (Dzamarija, 2008). The term 'immigrant population' (*innvandrerbefolkningen*) then, does not longer include persons born in Norway by foreign-born parents. What can be understood as another change in concepts are how *all* citizens, who are not immigrants, now are named

comes to how long families with transnational histories have lived in Norway. We argue that how multicultural pedagogy is conceptualised on a national level should take account of these differences in, for example, place, history, staff and local context. Consequently, bringing rurality into the knowledge production concerning early childhood education is of relevance.

### *The survey*

The survey was distributed by mail to pedagogical leaders and head teachers of kindergartens in all rural municipalities in 7 of 19 counties. A total of 525 pedagogical leaders and 288 head teachers responded. The respondents were asked about various topics and pedagogical practices related to how they worked with children and families from linguistic and cultural minorities in their institutions. None of the questions were open ended. To exemplify, they were asked questions or asked to respond to statements about their educational backgrounds, how they worked with linguistic minorities to learn Norwegian and to support home languages in formal and informal activities, in what ways they cooperated with parents, who is responsible for the various language learning activities, which topics that were most often used in formal pedagogical situations and what cultural context they were based on (for example, Norwegian, Somali, Polish), thoughts regarding the role of play, etc. They were also asked more informative contextual questions letting us imagine some of the premises of practices in rural areas. The survey thus aimed at creating knowledge about how staff in kindergartens in rural districts (with a low number of children and parents with minority backgrounds, mostly with refugee background) work to cater for the learning and participation of children from linguistic and cultural minorities, and some of the conditions they work under. The reported practices can also say something about how all the children are exposed to the fact that Norway is understood as a multicultural society. The survey is part of a larger project which also used qualitative methods. In this article we are solely reporting from the quantitative data.

### *Strategies for our analyses*

From the survey-data a frequency analysis was conducted. A frequency analysis can provide patterns that can tell us something about the frequency of what the respondents have replied to the various alternatives suggested under each question. From this analysis some key findings evolved. These findings are read in relation to the earlier presented visions and demands found in official documents. Thus, we look at how the Framework Plans' intentions seem to be incorporated in the everyday life in these kindergartens, and if the aims concerning emergent bilingual learning are realized. The main theory for the analysis is Baker's (2006) typology of *weak* and *strong* educational models, which we have expanded to apply both to the linguistic and the cultural context within the institutions. Baker's categories are useful as analytical tools to understand possible effects of the reported practices in the survey.

Baker's typology of *weak and strong educational models for bilingualism* illustrates two main different types of bilingual education. The strong forms, also called maintenance bilingual education, try to foster the minority language in the child and strengthen the child's sense of cultural identity. These have functional bilingualism and pluralism as the goal. Weak forms, also called transitional bilingual education, aim to shift the child from the home, minority language to

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according to where they are born and where their parents are born, when this is an issue in the statistics. This has resulted in new group concepts like: Norwegian-born with immigrant parents, born in Norway with two Norwegian-born parents, foreign-born with one Norwegian-born parent, Norwegian-born with one foreign-born parent, foreign-born with two Norwegian-born parents (Statistics Norway, 2010b). We here use *transnational* as a concept to temporarily name people who both fit the definition of an immigrant and their children and grandchildren.



the dominant, majority language. They have mastery of the majority language – monolingualism - as the goal and assimilation as an aim (Baker 2006:213). One type of weak form is the Submersion models. These kind of educational models are common both in kindergartens and schools in the western society. This type of programme does not acknowledge any culturally conditioned differences between students, and leads to the majority of the minority language children not being able to cope with the challenges facing them, linguistically and intellectually, and therefore also socially and emotionally (Baker, 2006, p. 216). Thus it will be difficult for them to take any advantage of their first language and home experiences, a situation which lowers their actual level of cognitive functioning and narrows their potential learning capacities, varying their individual experiences with the majority language (Engen 2000). In the next section we will report and analyse some of our findings. In our use of Baker's typology we will refer to the substance of his models in a more detailed manner.

### **What multicultural practices are reported in rural kindergartens?**

The findings we present and discuss here are chosen as a consequence of our reading(s) of the theories we make use of. As a result of this we concentrate on aspects of the staff's formal and informal competences, language practices and the curriculum.

#### *The formal qualifications of pedagogical staff*

We see the formal qualifications of pedagogues<sup>15</sup> and head teachers as crucial for the quality of children's experiences in kindergartens. The most common way to organise personnel is to have one pedagogical leader and two assistants in each unit and these three do most of their work with the children. To work as an assistant one is not required to have formal qualifications. Depending on the age of the children there are most often between nine and eighteen in each department, and one kindergarten can have several departments.

When we asked the respondent about their educational background 87 per cent of the pedagogical leaders and 81 per cent of the head teachers answered that they held a bachelor degree in early childhood education. Hence, the survey data show that about 13 per cent of the pedagogical leaders do not possess such a degree. It might be that some hold another degree, however, the data does not reveal in what subject or discipline. Only three per cent of the respondents, independent of their position and degree, had special courses in multicultural education<sup>16</sup> as part of their formal education. Table 1 shows how the number of pedagogical staff with formal multicultural educational competence is apportioned.

**Table 1 Number of pedagogical staff in kindergartens with formal multicultural education**

<b>Kindergartens in per cent (N=288)</b>	<b>Pedagogical staff with formal multicultural education</b>
90.3	<b>0</b>
8.7	<b>1</b>
0.3	<b>2</b>

<sup>15</sup> The head teachers report that 21, 9 per cent of the pedagogical staff is bilingual. In 82 per cent of the kindergartens the bilingual pedagogical staff does not share the same language background as the emergent bilingual children attending the institution.

<sup>16</sup> Due to the unstableness of this field, and thus concepts used to name such special courses, we have in the survey included special courses named multicultural pedagogy, minority pedagogy, migration pedagogy and Norwegian as second language, in what we here understand as *formal* multicultural education competence.

When the pedagogical leaders were asked about whether or not they thought they needed specific knowledge to work in a multicultural kindergarten 80 per cent answered *to a high or to some degree*. Seeing these answers together with the share that do have formal education in multicultural pedagogy, which was three per cent, makes it possible to ask new productive questions. Examples are: Do the answers indicate that pedagogues want more formal training in multicultural issues? Do they find it challenging to meet the demands in the framework plan? Is it possible that the low number of children from linguistic and cultural background in rural areas influence preschool teacher students in a direction where such competence is seen as not necessary? Or do they think that they already possess this specific knowledge and express that their bachelor has prepared them for working in multicultural kindergartens in useful ways?

Only a few university colleges educating preschool teachers offer special courses in multicultural education, so what table 1 shows is not unexpected. It is then even more important to look at what epistemology a mainstream programme is based on. In a research on the epistemology of early childhood education in Norway, Strand (2006) found that what is cultivated within this field is 'the "good Norwegian childhood" which she claims 'contributes to the preservation of "Norwegianness"' (p.97). Complexity in terms of audible languages, visible skin tones and upraising may challenge this. We wonder however if it is possible to seriously change pedagogy if it is not grounded in theoretical perspectives which take into account different epistemologies.

Some preschool teachers have gained informal competences from extended experiences from working in multicultural kindergartens. Nevertheless, the respondents in a survey evaluating language stimulation grants state that in municipalities with a low number of multilingual children, the staff consider themselves to lack competence to offer language stimulation for emergent bilingual learners. The reported competences of staff in municipalities where more children with the same background attend are much more optimistic (MERc, 2006, p.29). In Obel's (2007) work on professionalism and multicultural pedagogy in a rural area, she found that despite some preschool teachers' many years of experience with diverse children groups, they lacked theoretical foundations from which to consider and develop their practices in diverse lingual and cultural groups.

The frequency analysis from our survey shows that 58 per cent of the pedagogical leaders answered positively when asked if they work to strengthen cultural diversity. This might indicate that they view diversity work as important within their institutions, and that it is something that they thought was being practiced at the time of the survey. However, we find it likely that the practices going on in multicultural kindergartens in rural areas are not reflecting theoretical knowledge for practising pedagogy in complex times. This will be further exemplified in the following sections. We are thus suspicious of whether contemporary pedagogical practices have changed to meet the experiences and competences that all children, regardless of language and culture, bring with them to kindergarten institutions. There is thus a good possibility that the pedagogical leaders understand cultural and lingual diversity as important issues, but that they lack formal competence to practice a multicultural pedagogy. This then puts them in a quite difficult position.

#### *Emergent bilingualism*

The survey also provides us with information concerning whether or not all children are surrounded with their home language. 22 per cent of the personnel working with the children are bilingual, however very few of them have the same language backgrounds as the children with home language practices other than Norwegian, Sami, Danish, Swedish and/or English. 83 per cent of the kindergartens report that none of the emergent bilingual learners get bilingual assistance. In addition

the data also show that parents of emergent bilingual learners seem to be used to very little extent in relation to everyday activities.

When it comes to languages and how these are understood as providing an 'inclusive community' for all children, the Framework Plan states that:

Many children do not have Norwegian as their mother tongue, and learn Norwegian as a second language at their kindergartens. It is important that these children are understood and get the opportunity to express themselves. Kindergarten must support them in their use of their mother tongue, whilst working actively to promote their Norwegian language skills (MERA, p.19).

To get a more complex picture of what the pedagogues do to ensure emergent bilingual learners the same opportunities as Norwegian monolingual children, we asked the pedagogical leaders for data about language activities for emergent bilingual learners in the children's home languages and/or in the society's dominant language. We found that support in children's home languages is given to quite a low degree. This is in line with the percentage of children offered bilingual assistance. In the cases where language stimulating activities are part of the practice, such language stimulation is mainly given in Norwegian. 25 per cent of the pedagogues report that short shifts of support in Norwegian are given on a regular basis. 35 per cent report that they regularly work with emergent bilingual learners before or after group activities, however only in Norwegian. This can be understood as a result of the lack of bilingual personnel in the kindergartens. From this then it is highly likely that quite a large group of emergent bilingual learners in rural areas do not get any extra support in terms of language stimulation; neither in their home languages nor in the society's dominant language.

The intentions in the policy documents regarding mother tongue support can be understood as only partly fulfilled, as the pedagogues seem to take the responsibility regarding the dominant language seriously. However, the reported practices when it comes to supporting all children's home languages seem far from what is suggested by the Framework Plan as a way of practicing language-work in multilingual groups and with emergent bilingual learners. Even though some emergent learners are offered special language support and stimulation in Norwegian, we would place the general practices found in the survey-data within Baker's understanding of *submersion* (Baker, 2006, 215-216), or more precisely, submersion with transition-support in the dominant language (Engen & Kulbrandstad, 2004, p. 203). According to Baker, weak forms of bilingual education do not practice 'maintenance of the home language and cultural pluralism' (Baker, 2006, p.225). This correlates with what is reported in the survey.

### **Maintaining and developing bilingual competences are important for various reasons.**

Holmen (2006) writes that a kindergarten pedagogy that aims solely at teaching children the second (or third) language has many weaknesses. She points to the fact that the home languages plays an important role in the learning of the second language, and that this happens through activities that take place in both (or all) languages. Furthermore, children's social and cognitive development is promoted best if they can use their entire linguistic repertoire, which means that they can use knowledge of the world which they have acquired through their home experiences and languages for further learning. Both languages are important tools in the children's learning process. She says that it is a danger that kindergarten staff become so pre-occupied with the child's lack of the dominant language competence that they forget to look at other sides of the child's development, and look at them as individuals. Because of this, they may well acquire the view that minority language children in kindergarten are a "problem" (Holmen, 2006:210). If one starts a one-sided second language learning too early, the home language(s) can be lost. This would be very

unfortunate for several reasons, amongst others the relationship with the parents and the belonging to the minority cultural community.

It is more and more common to give minority language children a pedagogical offering in the second language as the language of instruction, based on the assumption that the younger the child is, the quicker and more fully they will learn the second language solely by being exposed by it. Holmen (2006) draws the conclusion that if minority language children are to receive optimal preparation before school, the kindergarten's pedagogy should build on both the mother tongue and the second language, so that one can always link the children's prior experiences and what happens in kindergarten. Results from the survey show that it is likely that the pedagogies reported do not provide such conditions for children from linguistic and cultural minority backgrounds.

*Curriculum and content*

As stated earlier, 'cultural diversity shall be reflected in kindergartens' (MER, 2006a, p.5). In the *Leaflet regarding linguistic and cultural diversity*<sup>17</sup>, this seems to mean that the linguistic and cultural background of all children must have consequence for the pedagogical content, didactics and organisation (MER, 2006b, p.7). As an illustration of whose experiences and competences the activities seem to confirm in the survey kindergartens, we have below provided a table illustrating the cultural background topics in pedagogical activities.

**Table 2 Topics and the cultural background they relate to**

Topics in formal and informal conversation and activities every day/several times of week:	Minority cultures	Majority culture (Norwegian)
Home life and home culture	8%	63%
Words and terms/language	9%	64%
Songs and rhymes	4%	94%
Fairy tales	2%	44%
Authors or literature	3%	65%

Table 2 shows that the preschool teachers report to more often base conversations and activities on dominant cultural traditions and ways of living. This might not be understood as problematic as the majority of the children probably do have competence and experience connected to such knowledge. Further, kindergarten is politically understood as the most important arena for learning the Norwegian language and culture for children from linguistic and cultural minorities. Before discussing these somewhat complex demands, we want to think through more reasons for why the

<sup>17</sup> As a supplement to the framework plan the Ministry of Education and Research has published eleven leaflets focusing on knowledge and experiences within different issues of current interest for kindergartens. These can be used by practitioners as foundation for reflection regarding pedagogical practice. [http://www.regjeringen.no/en/dep/kd/dok/veiledninger\\_brosjyrer/2008/temahefter---rammeplan-for-barnehagen.html?id=498148](http://www.regjeringen.no/en/dep/kd/dok/veiledninger_brosjyrer/2008/temahefter---rammeplan-for-barnehagen.html?id=498148).

practices showed in table 2 seem so common? Every pedagogue cannot continuously have knowledge of all the cultures and languages represented in their department. We think here of parents and other persons from the ethnic groups as a potential source in multicultural pedagogy. From the data we find that parents from linguistic and cultural minority backgrounds are used to a very low degree as sources of knowledge for various activities or in language stimulation. These findings again fits Baker's category of submersion.

The home languages and cultures for all children seem not to be visible or audible in terms of usage and content in the formal and informal activities. It is likely that it is expected that the children adapt to the norms and practices of the majority. According to Baker (2006) and Tomas & Collier (2003) this situation is not optimal for learning and participation. We also do not find that the reported practices give grounds for early prevention of discrimination, nor do we see them as ensuring social equality.

### **Possible implications for the pedagogies reported**

Our analysis of the findings is that the reported practices can be perceived as what Baker (2006) terms a submersion educational model. Submersion reflects a practice where the language of the classroom in all subjects is the society's dominant language. Accordingly, the societal and educational aims of the programme can be understood as assimilation, and the aims in language outcome are monolingualism in the dominant language. Research shows that assimilation education models, like submersion educational models and aims of monolingual knowledge, are less effective for identity affirmation and for learning and participation (Collier & Thomas 2009, Baker 2006, Cummins 2004, Engen 2009). Many young people growing up under such conditions do not learn the dominant language well enough. This can thus be regarded as an unsuccessful assimilation process (Engen & Kulbrandstad, 2004, p.202). It is possible to understand the data in different ways. Our understanding is that not all children may use their knowledge of the world and themselves in this world, acquired through their home language practices and in their home cultural context, for further learning and participation in the everyday institutional life. The kindergartens thus function as variants of weak educational models as it is the learning of Norwegian and dominant norms that are emphasised. This then supports Strand's findings of an epistemology that contributes to uphold Norwegianness (Strand, 2006).

The type of programme that the survey-data seem to depict does not acknowledge any culturally conditioned differences between children, leaving emergent bilingual learners totally dependent upon their competence in the society's dominant language. It leads to a situation where not all children are able to cope with the challenges facing them, linguistically and intellectually, and therefore also socially and emotionally (Engen & Kulbrandstad, 2004). It is likely that this situation lowers some of the children's actual levels of cognitive functioning and narrows their potential learning capacities, varying according to their individual experiences with the dominant language (Engen, 2000).

Practising pedagogy where children are "forced" to use Norwegian is not a strategy which is recommended in kindergartens (Holmen, 2006). In the long run it appears that submersion as an educational strategy for minority language students gives this group the weakest school results at the end of compulsory school (Thomas & Collier, 2003). Holmen (2006) describes the language drowning model as a 'school loser model' (our translation) (p. 230). A kindergarten programme that aims solely at teaching the children the dominant language and the majority cultural context has many weaknesses as the linguistic and cultural competence of some groups is not taken into consideration and used as a starting point for learning and participation.

### Interim conclusions

Drawing on the survey it is reasonable to suggest that not all children are given the same opportunity to use their entire linguistic and cultural repertoire. Most would likely agree that it is important for all children, whether or not from linguistic and cultural minorities, to be able to both learn and participate with the competences and experiences each bring with them to kindergartens. It is important for every child (and children collectively) to accumulate knowledge (individual and collective, of the world and of themselves in this world) and construct their identities in productive ways, for example, as active participants in a democratic society. We do think the respondents of the survey would also agree to this, as this can be said to be part of a dominant pedagogical discourse taught in bachelor programmes in early childhood education and of the overarching politics of the society. Our critique, as may be read between the lines, is not then directed towards the preschool teacher profession. Rather we wish to point to how the demands in educational policies may not always fit the conditions in rural areas. According to our definition of rural, Norway is a rural nation. Thus, national policies 'ought to embrace multicultural perspectives that include the ramifications of locality in modern society' (Theobald & Herley, 2009, p. 426). In risk of being too bold we suggest that locality must take into account rurality, and the conditions that preschool teachers in such areas work under. Preschool teachers all over the country are arguably in need of theoretical perspectives to transform what is outlined in the Framework Plan to their local, multicultural contexts. This is not then about numbers but about offering all pedagogues in kindergartens, future preschool teachers, and others holding more administrative positions in rural municipalities, formal competence on many levels regarding how pedagogy can be practiced in complex times.

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## **Mainstream Bilingual Teachers – Redefining their Role as both Educators and Transmitters of Culture.**

**Khadija Mohammed**

*University of the West of Scotland*

### **Abstract**

This paper draws on a qualitative study conducted with three mainstream bilingual teachers from the West of Scotland. The teachers were educated in Scotland and came from different cultural and religious backgrounds. Each of the teachers was interviewed and their responses were analysed, in an attempt to capture their life experiences and how various influences such as family, culture, peers and schooling affected them in the formation of their own identities. The paper emphasises the need for teachers to acknowledge and value their pupils' cultural, linguistic and religious identities. It further highlights that the linguistic expertise of a mainstream bilingual teacher in addition to his/her own lived experiences can be used to inform the whole school community in supporting cultural diversity. The key findings have implications for teachers working in culturally diverse classrooms.

### **Introduction**

The aim of this qualitative study was to explore how a mainstream bilingual teacher's cultural and linguistic identity can be used to inform school practice. These were the responses offered by Lucy and Anika, when asked if the schools they attended, as pupils, acknowledged their cultural heritage. It demonstrates the need for particular attention to the diverse needs of pupils.

*"I didn't have that feeling that sense at all of being a part of the school community".*

*"...you never shared this with your teacher because she never really asked....you never got the opportunity to kind of discuss it at length."*

The growing pupil diversity in the West of Scotland has brought with it a new set of challenges for teachers. This presence of diversity is often defined as a problem and policy makers respond by promoting educational policies which aim to eradicate this problem. The Department of Education and Science (DES) (1963) published 'English for Immigrants' as a solution and Mills & Mills (1993) research revealed that children whose first language was not English were to be assimilated as quickly as possible. The answer to their 'problem' was focussed teaching in the majority language, English and through the integration of pupils quickly into the majority culture. These children not only need to understand what it means to be Scottish but also need to understand how their own culture is placed within the classroom. Only when their culture is acknowledged and valued in the classroom will the children achieve a true sense of belonging. (Kearney 2003)

Cummins (1996:2) states that pupils can be 'empowered' through valuing the cultural identities within the school curriculum and that there needs to be a process of 'negotiating identities' which is fundamental in determining the educational achievement of these pupils. This process will involve important interactions between the children and their teachers in which they discuss and explore different cultures.

Policy statements and legislation in the current Scottish climate have raised the profile of pupils from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. The Education (Additional Support for Learning)

(Scotland) Act 2004 emphasises the need to match the provision to the needs of each individual learner, including bilingual learners. Learning and Teaching Scotland (2005) have published "Learning in 2+ Languages". Issues such as inclusion, cultural diversity, race equality and effective additional language provision with regards to addressing the needs of bilingual pupils are being encouraged within educational establishments.

The new Scottish Curriculum 'Curriculum for Excellence' proposes that all Scottish pupils should become successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors. It is argued that a supportive environment is vital to attain these four capacities, in which teachers and pupils are engaged in a dialogue about their lived experiences. Young children need to understand how their identities are shaped and they need time to explore what they think, what they see, how they behave and how they understand, as a result of their own experiences.

To facilitate this process of negotiating identities we need our classrooms to be "sites of cultural making" where children can find their own self-worth and place in a community where they feel belonged (Hardcastle 1992:6). Classrooms where children can freely explore different cultures; where they have opportunities to use their first language and multilingual labels/signs are displayed. This process involves credulous interactions, between the child and the teacher, within the safe realms of the classroom where teachers work hard to build on children's previous experiences.

### **Method**

The data presented in this paper, therefore, aims to explore the experiences of three mainstream bilingual teachers who were all educated in Scotland. The teachers are from diverse linguistic, religious and cultural backgrounds. They also have formal qualifications in Primary Education. It highlights that their own cultural and linguistic experiences can be used to inform the whole school community in supporting diversity and more importantly being regarded as positive role models and as transmitters of culture.

In order to explore the role of culture and language in the construction of the mainstream bilingual teachers' identities and how their linguistic and cultural expertise can help the school community, semi-structured interviews were chosen as the most appropriate method of enquiry. As Robson (2002) states this type of qualitative instrument generates more detailed responses and would allow me to engage with the respondent's experiences, motivations and views.

Three mainstream bilingual teachers were interviewed. It is important to highlight that this study was conducted for a Masters dissertation hence the small scale nature of this research. The sample size of three mainstream bilingual teachers, all female, was also indicative of the teaching profession, a quintessential monoculture and monolingual female domain and therefore even more problematic to identify a bilingual male teacher. The teachers have been educated in Scotland and are now teaching in the West of Scotland. They were chosen because of their cultural backgrounds and their bilingual expertise. Lucy is of Chinese origin and arrived in the UK at the age of twelve; Iman is of Pakistani origin and Anika is of both Pakistani and Indian origins. They both were born in Scotland.

The transcriptions of the interviews were studied carefully, looking for similarities and differences within the responses offered. The emerging themes were identified: The influence of cultural heritage; maintaining cultural language (community schooling); dominant culture (schooling, peers & media); teachers own views on their identities and finally their bilingual expertise (Kearney 2003).

### **Identity, Culture and Language**

As this paper is exploring the personal identities and experiences of three mainstream bilingual teachers, it is important to briefly look at how identity is constructed. When one deliberates about one's identity, then the focus generally is on physical appearance, how others perceive you and the language you use to communicate. We evolve through our interactions continually joining the pieces of the jigsaw puzzle. (Cummins, 1996)

Theorists acknowledge that culture and language are key indicators of our identities and they see it as part of personal histories and colonialism. ( Vygotsky (1978); Bakhtin (1981); Hall (1996) Kearney (2003)). However, we are living in an increasingly interdependent world where Britain's colonial history has left us with multiple layers to our identities (Cummins 1996). A bilingual pupil, for example, could be British as well as being Scottish, Pakistani and a Muslim which means that a second or third generation Pakistani, not only requires to understand and make connections between his/her parents' cultural heritage and language but also the culture of the society in which he/she was born in. Simply put 'east meets west'. There are many combinations possible, due to the diversity of the culture which surrounds us today.

Vygotsky's (1986) socio-cultural theory understands human development as intrinsically social and that one develops through his lived experiences, social, historical and cultural. It is therefore essential to allow children to develop the language and culture they bring from home. It has been suggested that young children use narrative for all kinds of discourse and that our lives achieve meaning through stories from our life histories (Holstein & Gubrium 2000). It is through these stories that children develop the language and culture they bring from home and through this critical process the identities of these children are affirmed.

The interactions and dialogues between teachers and their bilingual pupils communicate what is respected and viewed as the norm in the classroom community. The Community Relations Commission (1976:1) stated that "the children of Asian parents are a generation caught between two cultures". The culture at home is reflected by the parents and the school culture is reflected by the majority culture. This leads to confusion and when this happens parents cannot pass on their values and beliefs. Corson (2001) argues that schools should be adopting a pluralist policy, where the values of different cultures will be recognised. Where schools encourage assimilation as promoted by policies similar to 'English for Immigrants', children don't get a chance to develop their identities.

The Children (Scotland) Act (1995) places a duty on local authorities to have regard 'so far as is practicable' to the child's cultural and linguistic background. Schools have latched on to the issue of 'practicability' and that bilingual children have a valid reason to believe that they do not have an equal chance when compared to their dominant peers.(e.g. Brooker, 2002 p158) In effect, their culture and language have not been fully recognised and their interests have not been considered by policy makers. Many schools consider the ethnic composition of their schools and appear to respond accordingly, if they have few children from the ethnic minorities then they feel that they do not have a 'problem' (Gaine, 2006).

A bilingual pupil enters the classroom like any other child with a reservoir of knowledge, understanding and experience. This can provide a meaningful context which the teacher can build upon. In failing to do this, teachers are inadvertently giving out the message that whatever the children have learned in life so far is irrelevant to their school experience. Cummins (2001) argues that although teachers are constrained to some degree with the educational structures and policy makers, they do still have choices in the way they structure the interactions in the classroom.

Ideally teachers need to share children's culture and understand their values and norms well enough to pass that cultural knowledge onto their colleagues. More teachers have to work in settings where many different cultures and languages congregate in the same classroom. Conteh et al. (2007) asserts that although schools are aware of the different languages spoken, they make little use of these linguistic skills in the mainstream classroom. Many teachers resort to stereotype beliefs, as they have difficulty in finding out about the cultural background of their pupils. For example, Powney et al. (1998) carried out a review for the Scottish Executive on research into ethnic minority education in Scotland. They found that in some cases the interactions between teachers and pupils disadvantaged those from ethnic minority backgrounds. Initial teacher education programs provide student teachers with an optional subject on supporting bilingual learners. Smyth (2003) found that teachers who had recently qualified lacked knowledge in supporting and responding to the needs of all pupils with regards to their cultural, religious and cultural backgrounds.

Cummins (2001) asserts that the more knowledge teachers have about their pupils' cultural background, the more likely they are to make the right choices in interacting with them. The mainstream bilingual teacher will have a past history and this narrative could be utilised in a very effective way as he/she will have been through the process of shaping and reshaping aspects of his/her identity. It is suggested that through these interactions and dialogues children from diverse cultures will be able to relate to the teacher more readily in credulous conversations. (Kearney 2003)

Many children from the ethnic minorities attend community classes on a Saturday morning. This allows them to develop their first language and mix with teachers and children who share the same cultural practices, for example, they speak the same first language and share an understanding of the culture at home. Sneddon (2003) carried out a pilot study of teachers in supplementary and mother tongue schools. She stated that they had a huge commitment to their communities and that they were aware of the important role they occupied as transmitters of language and culture. Many of the teachers who work in the community schools do not have a formal teaching qualification. They support the child's mother tongue by helping them to read and write it in their first language. The bilingual teachers also felt that they had a role to play in the wider society, mainly bridging cultural divides. Recent research shows that community schools help these young children to affirm their identities and that perhaps, mainstream educators should establish links with these community schools (Conteh et al. 2007).

Bhatti (2007) makes reference to the fact that teachers from ethnic minority backgrounds face more problems than their majority ethnic colleagues. They feel undervalued and have to work harder to prove their capabilities. A study undertaken by Santoro & Reid (2006) looked at the career paths of indigenous teachers in Australia. They were trying to come to an understanding of their lived experiences and identify trends of recruiting and retraining these teachers in the profession. They both argue that the social community view the indigenous teacher as a 'Jack of all trades' and this is resulting in the indigenous teachers leaving the profession (Santoro & Reid 2006). The under representation of indigenous teachers and teachers of ethnic backgrounds is also highlighted. In order to achieve a higher status, some bilingual teachers are being encouraged to further their qualifications into mainstream subject teaching. However, this is leading to some bilingual teachers entering mainstream with new qualifications but are then choosing to ignore their linguistic and cultural expertise as they feel that their skills are not valued (Valenta, 2009).

The mainstream bilingual teacher can establish stronger links with these community schools and

parents by communicating with them in their home language and by drawing on their linguistic and cultural heritage. Bilingual mainstream teachers will be able to function as role models and inform the whole school community in supporting diversity.

### **The influence of Cultural Heritage**

All three teachers were asked to speak a little about their parents' lives leading to the time they settled in Britain. Lucy spoke about this in detail:

“My dad was born in China and my mum was born in Hong Kong...then he left China and settled in Hong Kong and then worked for a number of years, about six or seven years and then he met my mum...he left when I was five, came over to Scotland, because he felt at that time Hong Kong was going through a depression and there were not many jobs about and he wasn't educated, so he thought maybe Scotland was better for him and his family.”

Iman and Anika spoke about their parents' reasons for coming to Britain, but did not reflect on their lives before they settled here. All three however, share family histories of struggle in their countries of origin: The separation of India and Pakistan, Hong Kong's depression and migrating in search for a better standard of living. Kearney (2003) suggests that it is easy to imagine conversations full of anecdotes relating to family life, but that these stories could prove to be a source of embarrassment to the young children. These stories should be given status in the classroom, in order for the bilingual child to feel valued rather than embarrassed about their multiple heritages? The teachers were asked to recall one of their earliest memories they have relating to their culture. Two spoke of celebrations, Chinese New Year and Eid, while Anika visited her parents' country of origin. Lucy appeared to be quite comfortable with her cultural identity, as she spoke positively about her experience:

(Cheering out loud) “Oh yes, Chinese New Year! Huge thing with children...we'd be excited. We don't have Hogmanay like the Scottish, the night before New Year, we do have the day before though and children would be ready, washed and they would have all their new clothes and wait till twelve and the minute it struck twelve, we'd be going downstairs to see our grandparents and wish them...light firecrackers...sees lion and dragon dances on New Years Day.”

The loud cheer confirmed how vivid this memory was and how much of an influence these celebrations had on her.

This leads us on to Anika, who found she had to 'hide' the fact that she was celebrating, “School didn't encourage it - you always kind of ended up like handing in a sick note or maybe kind of just not turning up.” However she does acknowledge that as a family, the celebration was valued and enjoyed.

It is interesting to note that Lucy speaks of her celebrations 'back-home' with such excitement. This marks a significant difference between Iman and Anika, who were born in the UK and Lucy who was born in her parents' country of origin, Hong Kong. Lucy remains much closer to her traditions in terms of her attitude, whereas Iman and Anika appear almost to want to keep their traditions 'invisible' and be quite content not to share them with the wider community.

It could be argued, however, that this appears to be a typical example of assimilation and Cummins (2000) states that this discourages students and in order to identify with the mainstream culture, they feel that they cannot retain their own cultural traditions and so 'hide' it and as Iman remarked "...it was just in your home, as you wish."

Anika spoke about her early memories of her visit to Pakistan with some excitement, but at the same time made it abundantly clear that it was not 'home':

"I felt really excited about going to Pakistan but it was always, it was home for my parents, it wasn't really home for me because I felt it was like a culture shock for me."

This raises the issue of 'a sense of belonging'. Although she acknowledged her extended family was there, she appeared to be failing to identify herself with some aspects of the culture. This would appear to confirm the statement made by the Community Relations Commission (1976) about the children of Asian parents born and brought up in Britain, to be a generation caught between two cultures, one at home with their parents and one at school. This can lead to a conflict between the child and the parent. Bhabha (1996:54) refers to this 'partial culture' and states "It is indeed something like culture's 'in-between', bafflingly both alike and different." Are we antagonizing the children by restricting their cultural boundaries? Hall (1996:3) offers further insight to this notion of being 'caught between two cultures'. He refers to identity as the 'the meeting point...the point of suture.' Kearney (1998:311) explores this point further by stating that "Being both 'insiders' and 'outsiders' simultaneously in a range of cultures gives them a unique vantage point." These children can understand, experience and communicate in two different worlds and therefore enjoy the best of both.

### **Maintaining Cultural Language**

Community schools as stated above play an important role in maintaining cultural language and identity. This is also true for the three teachers who have maintained their own cultural language by attending community schools and are very enthused by the services they deliver. Iman and Anika send their own children on a Saturday morning to their local community school. When asked the question, how much of a role did the community in which they lived play in helping them to construct their identity? Anika responded:

"Well I guess it's going to Saturday Urdu School and going to Mosque and trying to develop my cultural language and mix with other children from the same community and make friends in that aspect of my life. It was always good because you could just be yourself and I found myself speaking English and Punjabi with other children of my own age and my own culture basically. It was always a big thing for me and the thing about it is the teacher always kind of understood you because the teachers themselves knew where you were coming from..."

Lucy came to Britain at the age of twelve and she was quite fluent in her mother tongue. She was determined to keep developing her first language. "When I arrived I attended community school for a couple of years and that sort of maintained my development in the sense of my Chinese". As an adult, she completed a Diploma in Public Services and required to have fluency in speaking and written text. She adds this was "self-imposed" to further her career prospects.

Iman also speaks Urdu at home with her children and she recently achieved an A-Level Pass in her Urdu. Again the focus for this was to enhance her linguistic expertise, with a focus on using it when required.

Anika also maintained her language, but because it was her only way to communicate with her mother. Thus it became a necessity:

“I mean, I had to be able to communicate with my mum, who never spoke a word of English and now with having children of my own, I have to speak to them in Punjabi, so that they need to learn, you know, when their Granny is here they need to be able to understand what she's saying.”

She extends this to visits to Pakistan and the importance of being able to speak in your mother tongue and therefore has enrolled her children into a Saturday morning class, to reinforce what she does at home:

“I feel it's important, because in a way it's really a keeping in touch with the side of me... the Pakistani side of me, so to speak and the kids need to know that part of it.”

The importance of community schools in the retention of community language and cultures has been advocated by Sneddon (2003), in this case, ‘Saturday morning’ classes. They exist to help bridge cultural divides and as Lucy asserts “...gives the children a sense of who they really are, what their cultures are...I know my place and I know my culture.”

### **The Influence of Dominant Culture: peers, media and schooling**

Peer pressure is a powerful force and the issue of belonging to a specific group brings with it many confusions. Two points require to be raised here: firstly the three teachers were all reluctant to discuss their cultural heritage with their peers; secondly, there are elements of their cultural aspects which they are concealing to avoid possible embarrassment, as they are not considered to be the norms within the dominant culture. This is evident in what Lucy says:

“I have two peer groups. I have my Chinese group of friends and I have my Scottish group of friends and with my Chinese friends we enjoy the sorts of things Chinese people would enjoy...but when I was with my Scottish friends, I was exposed to their sort of culture...”

She goes on to compare herself to a ‘banana’. When with her Scottish friends, she feels ‘white’ even although she says “...I'm Chinese, can't dispute the colour of my skin.”

Anika explains: “I think I learned very quickly to use my cultural differences to my advantage, when I was with my Scottish friends I was just like them...”

She does however, go on to explain the limitations within her culture and how she cleverly concealed them from her peers by:

“I never gave any kind of skin colour or culture a second thought, however, I was still aware of it, my limitations...making feeble excuses to avoid going out late after school and stuff like that, you kind of always made up a reason why you didn't want to go just because you didn't want to feel being different from them.”

Anika's perception is illuminating and resonates with Kearney's (1996) notion of ‘insiders’ and ‘outsiders’. She is very aware of the ‘vantage’ point in living between cultures. Anika is actively constructing her identity by drawing on both her cultural experiences both at home and at school. Shain (2003) carried out a study on the schooling and identity of Asian girls. She challenged the

misconceptions of Asian girls and showed that they were not victims restricted by their cultures but in fact, actively engaged in constructing their own identities drawing from the range of cultures available to them.

The media is an extremely powerful source, which has a direct influence in the construction of one's identity. Anika feels strongly about the way the media portrays a stereotypical representation of the Asian culture, in particular, the type of jobs they hold:

“The media encourages stereotypes like jobs and careers that are held by the ethnic minority groups...the Chinese restaurant, the Indian take-away...and shopkeepers...”

From her childhood, she recalls that if people from Asian cultures appeared on the television at all, they were depicted in offensive ways. These negative images portrayed could perhaps explain the low self-image many bilingual children have, giving them cause to try and ‘conceal’ parts of their culture.

Anika further says:

“...and speaking English with an accent, you never see on the telly someone like myself speaking with a Glasgow accent, you've always got to have just the ethnic twang...”

Lucy holds similar views and talks of negative views portrayed about the Chinese children's life experiences outside the school are just the family ‘take-away’. Rather than challenge the influences of power relations, many teachers seem to unconsciously accept these views portrayed by the media. This would appear to reflect Tomlinson's (1997) view on teachers resorting to stereotypical beliefs.

Cummins (2001) asserts that bilingual children are in constant conflict with themselves, in search for representation, in search for a voice to be accepted and included. This could also raise questions about the importance of establishing links with Community Schools, a simple case of raising awareness and pulling on the linguistic and cultural expertise.

All three teachers were asked whether their school acknowledged their cultural heritage. The facial expressions revealed much about their views - raised eyebrows, long pauses and huge sighs - all appeared to show that their experiences of being at school were not entirely positive. They do agree, however, that on the whole, their schooling was a pleasant experience.

The similarities were quite evident in their responses. They all report that none of their teachers made attempts to connect with their cultural experiences. Iman remarks:

“I was very embarrassed, to be honest with you, I wouldn't talk about my religion, I wouldn't wear my shalwar and kameez...whereas there would be no harm if the teacher had acknowledged it, or if they actually understood it and discussed it.”

An example of the teachers' lack of awareness regarding their religious issues was during the month of Ramadan. Iman explained “...hiding the fact that I was fasting...quietly breaking a fast, not mentioning it, embarrassed totally.”

Lucy received her Primary Education in Hong Kong and attended a community school when she first arrived in Scotland. She attended the community school for a couple of years and then began her Secondary Education in a mainstream school. Suddenly she found herself in an inferior place, learning an inferior curriculum, one which did not take into consideration her linguistic or cultural



experiences. This would suggest that she was more comfortable with the community school where she felt these experiences were valued and nurtured. She asserts:

“...the community school certainly helps more...bring an awareness to who they really are, the cultural identity, the festivals, having celebrations, gives the children a sense of who they really are, what their cultures are.”

It therefore appears that Lucy's culture was obviously acknowledged in the community school, but did not transfer when she moved into mainstream and thus reinforced her feelings of inferiority:

“I was quiet, I wasn't able to communicate with my peers and I was picked on...I played truant, I would make excuses...It wasn't that I didn't enjoy school...I didn't enjoy the children aspect of the school...I wasn't welcomed into their social group...I didn't have ...that sense...of being part of the school community.”

Although teachers are constrained by their local educational authorities and the policy makers, they are in a position to choose how they negotiate the 'micro-interactions' in the classroom (Cummins 2001:208). Teachers are required to meet the individual needs of all their pupils and by openly discussing issues around culture and language they are able to empower the children.

All three were asked if their teachers had acknowledged their culture and what difference would it have made? The key message from their responses was that they would have been happier and more confident. Lucy explained how she went through a period of self-denial: “...asking myself who I really, really am?” It is vital that teachers take proactive steps to help bilingual children feel proud of their bilingual skills (Baker 2006). This devaluation of linguistic and cultural identity leads to a lack of academic effort, whereby they mentally withdraw from the life of the school, the result in this case, Lucy playing truant.

All three teachers seemed to have subsumed their cultural identities to get by in their education. However, the research carried out by Poplin & Weeres (1992) would suggest that teachers need to forge links with their pupils, to give status to their culture.

When asked about their own views with regards to their identities their responses indicated that they have a fluid and mobile sense of identity which continued to evolve through new experiences. Iman seems to be closer to her 'traditional' heritage and religion, whereas Lucy and Anika appear to have chosen to forsake some parts of their own culture. Iman remarks, “I'm definitely a Muslim person first...I associate with Pakistan and obviously...I feel my Scottish side.” She identifies with three strands: Muslim, Pakistani and Scottish. This further stresses the multiple repertoires to our identities. Lucy appears to be critical about aspects of both her own heritage and the dominant discourse:

“... I know who I am now. For a period in my life I'd gone through a sort of self-denial, an identity crisis...do I really fit into this group? I was confused.”

She further stresses that when at home she had to behave like a 'Chinese girl', “My community see me as peculiar...because I don't conform...I was expected to be married at a very young age, twenty something”. Lucy's comments illustrate how mixed messages and misunderstandings can occur between the parent and the child. Again, reinforcing that parents are then left in a position

where they cannot pass on their beliefs and values.

Anika offers an extended overview of how she sees her own identity, which is far more complex:

“I would jump out of my jeans and into my shalwar kameez, because it was like taking off one identity and putting on another...I could be a different person just by changing my clothes,”

### **Mainstream Teacher's Bilingual Expertise**

The teachers were asked a few questions regarding the number of years of service and whether they have had to cater for the needs of a child whose home language is not English.

Lucy has been teaching for five years in a mainstream school but did not have a bilingual child in her class in that duration. However, recently she has moved into Bilingual Support:

“I have to use all my language skills and my own experience as a bilingual...to support class teachers...to be aware of children's needs...individual differences...first language...to help the acquisition of the second language.”

Iman has been used in the capacity of ‘translator’ within her own school, to make contact with the parents. She also explains:

“I've got no qualms about speaking our own language, just to make the child feel comfortable...make other children aware in the class of this child's cultural background.”

Anika, although bilingual, does not feel confident when dealing with a new entrant into her class: “I feel that I've not done enough...I did try to speak to the girl in Punjabi but she seems quite shy, I think she's embarrassed in front of her peers.”

This evidence would suggest that teachers should ensure that their classrooms are safe environments, where children feel comfortable to express themselves. A need to be more analytical in their implementation of the curriculum is required to avoid a cultural mismatch.

All three teachers had clear views on how to use their linguistic expertise to inform school policy. Lucy spoke about “effective parent partnership.” Anika responded “real partnerships...use their expertise and value...support.”

Iman explains more intricately:

“...schools are always complaining that Asian parents don't come, but how are you welcoming them, you're not...what are you doing to help that child or that parent come into school?”

Asian parents are often accused of being disinterested in their children's education. (Cummins, 1996). There is a fundamental need for effective partnerships between parents and teachers.

The three teachers interviewed have demonstrated through their thought processes the complexity of their lived experiences. They each have multiple repertoires to their identities, which have been shaped and reshaped by both their own cultural heritages and by the wider dominant culture in which they live.

### **Conclusion**

From the analysis of the evidence, it can be concluded that all three teachers held a strong sense of self, their identities firmly rooted in family history and culture.

This is indicated in the comments made by Lucy, regarding how she conceived of her identity and she speaks of going through a process of self-denial, an identity crisis, being confused with the issue of 'fitting in' to a group and the notion of 'behaving like a Chinese'. Iman and Anika also indicate in their responses that their families have had a great influence in who they are today. The responses from the interviews suggest that a strong relationship exists between one's identity, culture and education. Teachers should be more conscious of the fact that their interactions with bilingual pupils communicate powerful messages regarding their cultural identities. This is clearly indicated in both the comments made by Iman and Anika, where they felt embarrassed about fasting during the month of Ramadan and wearing their traditional dress (shalwar and kameez). They emphasise that their culture was not valued and in effect this led them to conceal parts of their identities. Lucy's response elaborates this further when she commented on how she did not feel a part of the school community because her teachers did not acknowledge or engage in any discussions regarding her cultural background.

All three teachers also indicate in their responses that they use their own cultural backgrounds to inform their classroom practice and that of their colleagues. Iman indicated that she would make the pupils feel comfortable and give them a sense of belonging. A mainstream bilingual teacher can support learners and teachers in sharing their own personal stories and that these narratives would be fundamental to the children in making sense of the world around them. Their linguistic expertise can be used to support school staff over their initial fears and engage in collaborative planning, to ensure that the linguistic and cultural demands are addressed.

If teachers have a deeper insight into their pupils' cultural backgrounds, they would be in a better position to interact more appropriately with them. This highlights the need to establish links with community school teachers. The mainstream bilingual teacher can help to achieve this whole school awareness by creating real partnerships with parents. Again this was very evident in the evidence where Iman makes reference to the way in which we welcome 'Asian' parents to the school, or perhaps make them feel unwelcome.

This article has implications for school policy in meeting the needs of bilingual children. It is not simply about making change but about asking fundamental questions concerning the way in which the organisation is structured. It is therefore recommended that when producing a policy statement regarding bilingual children, the whole school community, i.e. parents, pupils, teachers and ancillary staff should all be involved in discussions on the values of bilingualism. It should challenge mainstream bilingual teachers to redefine their role as both educators and transmitters of culture.

*Khadija Mohammed is a Lecturer in Childhood Studies at the School of Education, University of the West of Scotland, United Kingdom.*

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## **Strategies of Differentiation in a multi-linguistic, multi-religious and multi-cultural school**

**Thor Ola Engen and Sidsel Lied**

*Hedmark University College, Norway*

**Contact: [thor.engen@hihm.no](mailto:thor.engen@hihm.no)**

As a result of globalization and migration processes, most schools in Western European countries today are more multi-linguistic, multi-religious and multi-cultural than ever before. Still, language minority students are placed in mainstream classrooms, often described as submersion, to convey the idea that the language minority student in this way is thrown into the deep end and expected to learn to swim as quickly as possible without the help of floats or special swimming lessons. The language of the pool will be the majority language (e.g. Norwegian in Norway) and not the home language of the child. Further, the language minority student will be taught all day in the majority language, typically alongside fluent speakers of the majority language. Both teachers and students will be expected to use only the majority language in the classroom, not the home language (Baker, 2006:216).

Some language minority students will “swim”, in the sense that they acquire the majority language and perform academically on level with their language majority peers. In Norway, Engen (2003, 2009a) has argued that such a submersion strategy may lead to academic success for language minority students, but only in those cases where the home is in a position to compensate, supplement and mediate the schools’ unilateral majority cultural influence with home cultural perspectives. As most language minority parents probably are unprepared to meet the challenges involved, a majority of language minority students will either struggle academically or “sink” (for empirical evidence, see (for empirical evidence, see Engen, Sand, & Kulbrandstad, 1997; Aasen, Engen, & Nes, 2003). For students without adequate parental support, academic success is reserved for the most gifted, provided they also work hard enough. In addition, less gifted students who are prepared to work a lot harder than their peers may succeed. This may be why the variation between ethnic groups is alarming (Hvistendahl & Roe, 2004; Nordahl, 2009), and why assimilation so seldom seems to be the actual outcome of submersion approaches (Engen, 2003, 2009a).

To prevent submersion language minority students need teaching more adapted to their needs. In the first section of this article we will therefore give a brief overview of approaches for the education for bilingual students, based on Colin Bakers’ typology of bilingual education. The main objective of this article, however, is to introduce a new principle of differentiation within the mainstream classroom, dual qualitative differentiation, with religious education in Norwegian schools as an example. Based on a more general discussion of the concept of differentiation in the second section of the article, we will clarify more precisely what we mean by dual qualitative differentiation in the last section.

**Table 1 Colin Baker's typology of bilingual education**

<b>Table 1. Colin Bakers' typology of bilingual education<sup>18</sup></b>				
<b>MONOLINGUAL FORMS OF EDUCATION FOR BILINGUALS</b>				
<b>TYPE OF PROGRAM</b>	<b>TYPICAL TYPE OF CHILD</b>	<b>LANGUAGE OF THE CLASSROOM</b>	<b>SOCIETAL AND EDUCATIONAL AIMS</b>	<b>AIMS IN LANGUAGE OUTCOME</b>
Mainstreaming /Submersion (Structured Immersion)	Language Minority	Majority Language	Assimilation	Monolingualism
Mainstreaming /Submersion With Withdrawal Classes / Sheltered English /Content Based ESL	Language Minority	Majority Language With «Pull-Out» L2 Lessons	Assimilation / Subtractive	Monolingualism
Segregationist	Language Minority	Minority Language (Forced, No Choice)	Apartheid	Monolingualism
<b>WEAK FORMS OF BILINGUAL EDUCATION FOR BILINGUALS</b>				
<b>TYPE OF PROGRAM</b>	<b>TYPICAL TYPE OF CHILD</b>	<b>LANGUAGE OF THE CLASSROOM</b>	<b>SOCIETAL AND EDUCATIONAL AIMS</b>	<b>AIMS IN LANGUAGE OUTCOME</b>
Transitional	Language Minority	Moves From Minority To Majority Language	Assimilation / Subtractive	Relative Bilingualism
Mainstream With Foreign Language Teaching	Language Majority	Majority Language With L2/FI Lessons	Limited Enrichment	Limited Bilingualism
Separatist	Language Minority	Minority Language (Out Of Choice)	Detachment/Autonomy	Limited Bilingualism
<b>STRONG FORMS OF BILINGUAL EDUCATION FOR BILINGUALISM AND BILITERACY</b>				
<b>TYPE OF PROGRAM</b>	<b>TYPICAL TYPE OF CHILD</b>	<b>LANGUAGE OF THE CLASSROOM</b>	<b>SOCIETAL AND EDUCATIONAL AIMS</b>	<b>AIMS IN LANGUAGE OUTCOME</b>
Immersion	Language Majority	Bilingual With Initial Emphasis On L2	Pluralism End Enrichment	Bilingualism And Biteracy
Maintenance/ Heritage Language	Language Minority	Bilingual With Emphasis On L1	Maintenance, Pluralism And Enrichment Additive	Bilingualism And Biteracy
Two-Way/Dual Language	Mixed Language Minority & Majority	Minority And Majority	Maintenance, Pluralism And Enrichment. Additive	Bilingualism And Biteracy
Mainstream Bilingual	Language Majority	Two Majority Languages. Pluralism	Maintenance, Pluralism and Enrichment. Additive	Bilingualism

**Colin Bakers' typology of bilingual education**

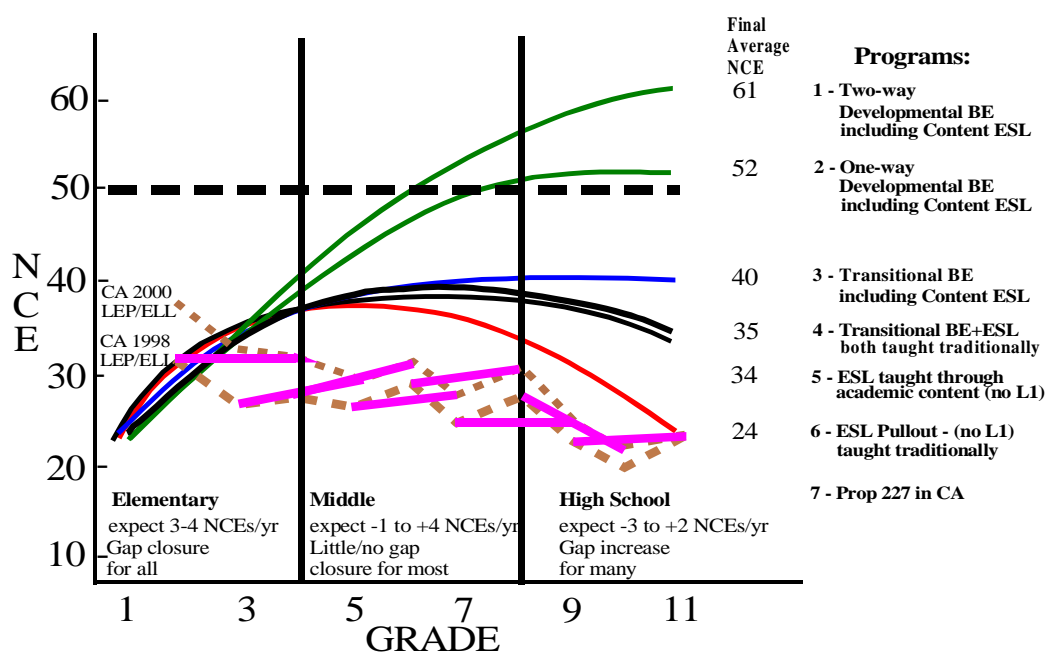
In his typology of bilingual education (Table 1) Baker (2006:215-216) has organized relevant programs in three major categories; Monolingual forms of education for bilinguals, Weak forms of bilingual education and Strong forms of bilingual education. Each program is further differentiated in relation to “societal and educational aims” and “aims in language outcome” (column 3 and 4). All monolingual forms of education for bilinguals – Mainstreaming / submersion, Mainstreaming / submersion with Withdrawal classes / Sheltered English / Content-based ESL – have the common characteristics that their aim is assimilation (or apartheid) and monolingualism. Thus, monolingual programs are designed as instruments for cultural and linguistic homogenization. If that is also their outcome, however, is a matter of discussion as pointed out above.

Programmes within the category Weak forms of bilingual education differ somewhat in their linguistic and societal aims, varying with the typical child in the classroom. But as far as language minority children are concerned, the most relevant programme – transitional – typically aims to move the language minority child from minority to majority language. All programmes within the category Strong forms of bilingual education – Immersion, Maintenance / Heritage language bilingual education, Two Way Dual language bilingual education and Mainstream bilingual education – have pluralism and enrichment as their societal and educational aim, and bilingualism as their aim in language outcome (Baker, 2006:228-258).

<sup>18</sup> (Baker, 2006:215-216)



How well different programmes succeed in preventing language minority children from struggling or sinking, have been discussed in several overviews (August & Hakuta, 1997; Bakken, 2007; Cummins, 2000). We will limit ourselves to consider one longitudinal study from the US context, conducted, summarized and discussed by Collier and Thomas (2009), where the researchers have compared seven different programmes (programs 1-7 in Figure 1) as far as academic achievement is concerned. The results visualized in Figure 1, indicate that the two programmes giving the best academic results for language minority students (as operationalized by test scores on Standardized Tests in English Reading), are Two Way and One way Dual language bilingual education (programs 1 and 2, green curves. As both programmes require teaching in the home language approximately half of the time and the majority language half of the time, they both belong to the category Strong forms of bilingual education in Bakker's typology. The ideal Two way and One way programmes, however, have been implemented in many slightly different varieties (for a detailed discussion, see Baker 2006), but one main difference between them is that in Two way programmes approximately 50 % of the students have a minority language background, while approximately 50 % have a majority language background. In One way programmes all students in a group have the same minority language background, e.g. Spanish.



**Figure 1**  
 Title: English Learners' Long-Term K-12 Achievement in Normal Curve Equivalents (NCEs) on Standard Tests in English Reading Compared across Seven Program Models.  
 Source Collier, V. P., & Thomas, W. P. (2009). *Educating english learners for a transformed world*. Albuquerque: Fuente Press, page 55.

The pair of programs (3 and 4, blue and black curves) with the second best academic achievement profiles are two (slightly different) Transitional Bilingual programs (transitional BE = transitional bilingual education), both belonging to the category Weak forms of bilingual education. Generally, transitional programs aim to move language minority children from minority to majority language. This means that the home language is the most important medium initially, while the majority language becomes more and more dominant towards the end of schooling. The main internal

difference between the programs is that program 3 also involves content ESL (English as a Second Language), while in program 4 ESL is restricted to the English language subject.

The third best pair of programs (5 and 6, purple and red curves) consists of two slightly different ESL Pull Out programmes. As no bilingual education is offered, both programs belong to the category Monolingual forms of education for bilinguals. In program 5, ESL is offered both as a subject and as an integrated part of content instruction, while in programme 6 – ESL Pull Out – ESL instruction is given only as a special subject in separate groups (cf. Withdrawal Programs in Baker's typology).

The weakest results as far as academic performance by language minority students is concerned, are obtained within programme 7 (pink dotted curve), labelled Prop. 227 in CA in the graph. This programme which was adopted in California in 1998 may be characterized as an all English mainstreaming – or submersion – program (cf. Cummins 2000, as well), and may thus be considered as representative – if not typical – of Baker's category Monolingual forms of education for bilinguals.

As all performance curves in the left part of Graph 1 are moving upwards towards the horizontal dotted line, indicating the age appropriate performance level in each grade, progress is strong in all programmes during the initial four years of schooling. Thus almost all programmes initially help students to close the achievement gap, and almost to the same degree, as well. An exception to this general pattern is programme 7.

After 5-7 years of schooling, however, the performance curves first flatten out, then start to move away from the horizontal line, indicating that the achievement gap once again widens. An exception is the curve of programme 3, which runs parallel to the horizontal line, but at a somewhat lower performance level than what is age appropriate. Further, the curve of program 3 has a better profile than the curve of program 4, while both transitional programs have better profiles than is the case of programs 5 and 6. Program 7 is moving steadily downwards.

Only language minority students following the strong forms of bilingual education (programmes 1 and 2) manage to close the achievement gap, albeit slowly. After 7-8 years of schooling, these students even outperform language majority students. Thus, Collier and Thomas' research gives strong evidence for recommending any strong (and even transitional) programme of bilingual education and for avoiding submersion programmes (cf. discussion in Cummins, 2000).

### **Strong programmes in Norway?**

The problem, at least in Norway, however, is that especially strong bilingual programmes are controversial. Firstly, it has been argued that bilingual programmes are hard to realize both for economical and practical reasons. This is especially the case in small communities where qualified bilingual teachers are a scarce resource, at the same time as the number of language minority students is low and the number of minority languages high (cf. Engen, 2009b; Engen, 2010b). Secondly, in a vivid debate on the effectiveness of bilingual programmes even influential researchers in the field have argued that data on the effects of bilingual education are inconclusive (e.g. Bakken, 2007). Thirdly, while the Norwegian National Curriculum of 1987 (NC-87<sup>19</sup>)

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<sup>19</sup> The Norwegian School system is still today highly centralized, and has a strong tradition for National Curricula being prepared by the national school authorities for all elementary and secondary schools in the country. Curricula are however implemented somewhat differently at the

recommended home language teaching as well as bilingual subject instruction to enable language minority students to develop functional bilingualism; political authorities have gradually become more restricted. In the national curriculum of 1997 (NC-97) functional bilingualism as the goal for language minority students was removed. Instead, it was maintained that language minorities should be included through the unification and standardization of language and culture (Helskog, 2003; Pihl, 2001, 2009). Finally, the national curriculum of 2006 (NC-06) states that instruction normally ought to take place within the mainstream classroom. Language minority students in need of any special assistance, however, are to follow a curriculum of Basic Norwegian for Language minority Students (cf. Sheltered English in Bakker's typology). Also home language instruction may be offered, but is reserved exclusively for students who are diagnosed as too weak to profit academically from even a modified mainstream program (Engen, 2010a).

Thus, Mainstreaming (with Withdrawal Classes) is the totally dominant strategy in Norwegian schools (Engen, 2010a). A more and more widespread mainstreaming approach in Norwegian school is work plans, a document organizing a sample of learning activities (assignments and exercises) for the whole class on different levels of complexity, for a given period of time. The approach or strategy is inspired by Deweyan progressivism and work shop teaching, developed in British classrooms in the 60s and 70s (Engen, 2010b; Klette, 2004, 2007; Olaussen, 2009), but also reflects a pedagogical rhetoric encouraging individualization by means of adequate *technologies*, assuming that schools and teachers should differentiate instruction in accordance with individual needs and requirements (Krejsler, 2007).

Why mainstreaming is preferred in spite of research evidence recommending strong bilingual programs, should probably be understood in a historical perspective. Since the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century Norwegian school history is characterized by a continuous struggle to channel all students into the main body of the school, what Dokka (1967; cf. Vislie, 1990) describes as a continuous movement towards a vision of *differentiated* teaching combined with *undifferentiated* social relations. The objective of this vision was initially linked primarily to the need for equal access, as a prerequisite for equal opportunities for all. But with the passage of time the achievement of undifferentiated social relations seems to have taken on the character of being a goal in itself. Today differentiated – adaptive – teaching combined with inclusion is so deeply rooted in the minds of teachers that they may be considered as twin values of the Norwegian unitary school (Engen, 2006a, 2006b). Thus, the NC 87 with its favourable attitudes towards bilingual education is the exception to the rule. It is the NC-97 and the NC-06<sup>20</sup> with their focus on cultural homogenization that reflect the long tradition.

### **Differentiation within the mainstream classroom**

Today it is unlikely that strong programs of bilingual education will be accepted as an adequate solution to the achievement problems of language minority students. And even if some kind of transitional program may be implemented in the near future (cf. Østberg, 2010), most language minority students will still spend most of their time in the mainstream classroom. We will therefore focus on how the quality of teaching within the mainstream can be improved. We will do this by comparing the mainstream program and the strong bilingual programs, in relation to their inherent principles of differentiation. In this way we may identify central characteristics or mechanisms that run across programs – as far as their potential for academic achievement for language minority students is concerned.

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school level, and at present schools have more freedom to make their own interpretations than they had earlier.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. footnote 2.

We have seen that all adaptive teaching in Norwegian schools is preferably supposed to take place within the mainstream context. A downscaling of all forms of *organizational* differentiation is therefore inherent in the program, making a strong preference for *pedagogical* differentiation an inherent characteristic in the principle of adaptive instruction. This is precisely why work plans are preferred to any withdrawal solutions, and why withdrawal solutions should concern as few students for as short time as possible, when they are accepted.

Further, preferred strategies such as work plans, which may be arranged on three levels of complexity, implies that pedagogical differentiation normally should be effectuated on the basis of quantitative criteria, implying that the learning material should be varied in relation to complexity, volume or pace. Finally and inherent in the preference for *quantitative* differentiation, the majority language and culture is taken for granted. When learning material preferably should be varied according to quantitative criteria only, it is implied that subject matter as such should be the same for all in substance, (and also that the language of the classroom should be one and the same), precisely in accordance with the concept of submersion.

In addition, the eradication of differentiation in qualitative terms is also implied, as *qualitative* differentiation encourages the use of alternative teaching materials and methods, whenever this is considered more appropriate to the culturally-related needs of a particular category of students. This is a crucial point, as the principle of qualitative differentiation probably is the major characteristic of strong bilingual programs, which encourage and enable language minority children to use their home language as a main instrument for learning. And because this kind of qualitative differentiation hardly can be implemented within a traditional mainstreaming context, some degree and kind of organizational differentiation may also be considered as a major characteristic of strong programs.

This argument may be corroborated by our discussion of Graph 1 above, which indicates that the academic performance of language minority students becomes gradually and systematically better as they move from program 7 to programs 2 and 1. It is our suggestion that this pattern of performance may be related to each program's inherent degree of qualitative differentiation, as well as its corresponding kind of organizational differentiation.

At the one extreme, the submersion program allows for no qualitative differentiation at all. At the other extreme, program 1 – through the use of both developmental bilingual education and content ESL – allows for optimal qualitative differentiation. Between the extremes, programs 3 and 4 also offer bilingual education and ESL instruction, while programs 5 and 6 do not offer education in two languages. Thus, programs 3 and 4 make use of qualitative differentiation, but as bilingual education is of a transitional kind, not to the same degree as programs 1 and 2. But they make use of qualitative differentiation to a larger degree than programs 5 and 6, as the latter offers no bilingual instruction. Thus, it seems that the academic performance of language minority students is systematically related to the kind of and to the degree of qualitative differentiation in each program, indicating that the need for qualitative differentiation is crucial in order to create equitable education.

Even if Norwegian school authorities prefer mainstreaming, they also recognize the power of qualitative differentiation, at least implicitly. This follows from the fact that the group of language minority students that is offered home language instruction is composed of students who are diagnosed as too weak academically to profit from the mainstream program, i.e. those students who need qualitative differentiation the most. That qualitative differentiation is restricted to one marginal group, however, suggests that the recognition of qualitative differentiation is limited.

Anyway, there is ambivalence in the authorities' attitude to qualitative differentiation, which in our opinion should be interpreted on the basis of the historically determined twin values already mentioned. As the objective of achieving *undifferentiated* social relations originally was linked to the need for equal access to an education for all, a negative bias against organizational differentiation still today may have a stronger influence on educational thinking than an honest recognition of the power of qualitative differentiation.

Based on our discussion of the seven different programs in Graph 1, however, it is our suggestion that the need for qualitative differentiation is the major concern, at least when the objective is to create equitable education. In such a case, there will often be a need for some kind of organizational differentiation, as well, even if this should be considered a secondary concern. It is only in the submersion program (program 7), which has the weakest academic results, that no organizational differentiation is involved. This is also the only program allows for no qualitative and organizational differentiation at all.

In program 1, the two way bilingual program, organizational differentiation involves putting together two student groups of approximately equal size, one of language majority and the other of language minority background. In the One way program (2), organizational differentiation requires one linguistically homogenous group. In programs 3 and 4 organizational differentiation implies providing for home language and ESL instruction, but in program 3 a major part of ESL teaching may also take place within the mainstream, as it is content based. This is the case also in program 5, while in program 6, ESL teaching requires pull out and in this way another kind of organizational differentiation.

Thus, organizational differentiation can be avoided only in the submersion model, which at the same time has the weakest academic results. In all other models, there is some kind of organizational differentiation, but it seems that the kind of organizational differentiation involved in each case, is adapted to the characteristics of the kind of qualitative differentiation involved, and not the other way around..

However, qualitative differentiation may also be realized within the mainstreaming context. To show that this is an option and that mainstreaming not necessarily has to be equivalent with submersion is in fact our main objective in this article. We have chosen dual qualitative differentiation, which we will discuss in the next section, as our main example. We will also point out; however, that dual qualitative differentiation should be combined or supplemented with bilingual subject instruction whenever possible. But first we will sum up some points concerning our discussion on the concept of differentiation.

### **The concept of differentiation**

Generally, the principle of differentiated instruction or education implies teaching adapted to meet the needs of individual students or groups of students – in relation either to their (assumed) learning readiness and / or to their (anticipated) plans for the future. It involves two interwoven variables; *quantitative* vs. *qualitative* differentiation on the one hand and *pedagogical* vs. *organizational* differentiation on the other, as demonstrated in Table 2.

**Table 2: A typology of differentiation strategies**

	<b>(Permanent or flexible) pedagogical differentiation</b>	<b>(Permanent or flexible) organizational differentiation</b>
<b>Quantitative differentiation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Individualization – systemic strategies administered by the school, e.g.: Work plans</li> <li>▪ Individualization – ad hoc-approaches initiated and administered by the teacher, e.g.: Work plans</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Special classes, special schools, reception classes, introduction classes</li> <li>▪ Streaming</li> </ul>
<b>Qualitative differentiation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Bilingual subject instruction</li> <li>▪ Dual qualitative differentiation and Bilingual subject instruction combined</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Withdrawal home language instruction</li> <li>▪ Strong and weak forms of bilingual education</li> </ul>

Firstly, differentiated teaching may be effectuated through some kind of systemic or organizational arrangement, e.g. special classes, special schools, reception classes, introduction classes or – more traditionally – streaming. But also mainstreaming or inclusion may be chosen as the schools' systemic strategy. In such a case, differentiated teaching also requires pedagogical differentiation, e.g. individualization, either administered by the school, e.g. work plans, or by the teacher, through ad hoc-approaches. In both cases, pedagogical differentiation is most often brought about on the basis of quantitative criteria, meaning that the majority culture and language is taken for granted. If differentiated teaching on the systemic level is effectuated through organizational differentiation, it is often because qualitatively differentiated teaching is considered crucial. Both strong and weak programs of bilingual education are typical illustrations of this case. However, qualitatively differentiated teaching may also occur within the mainstream, as in the case of bilingual subject instruction. In such a case the majority language is no longer taken for granted, while the majority culture still is. In the case of Dual qualitative differentiation, which we will discuss in the last section, it is the other way around, as we will show. If the two strategies are combined, however, neither culture nor language is taken for granted, meaning that the advantages of both qualitative and organizational differentiation are realized within the mainstream. How this can be done, we will discuss, using religious education in Norwegian schools as an empirical and historical example.

**Religious education as an example of Dual qualitative differentiation**

From 1739 till 1974 the only religion and belief subject in Norwegian schools was *Christian knowledge*. In 1974 *Philosophy of life* was introduced as an optional, alternative subject for those students who were exempted from the Christian knowledge subject, i.e. students who had at least one parent who was not a member of the state church (Lied, 2009).

The organisational differentiation of the religion and belief education which these two subjects represented persisted until the introduction of the new pluralistic religion and belief subject Christianity, Religion and Beliefs (CRB<sup>21</sup>) in 1997, which was established to give all students the same teaching about different religions and ethics by means of a compulsory subject with a pluralistic profile. Thus, Christianity, world religions, beliefs as well as philosophy and ethics were included in the subject curriculum. No students could be exempted from any of the purely factual

<sup>21</sup> The Norwegian acronym is KRL.

parts of this subject, only from participation in activities which could be seen as religious observance or approval of a particular faith (Kirke- utdannings- og forskningsdepartementet, 1998). An important factor behind the introduction of CRB was the growing pluralism in Norwegian society and schools from the 1970s onwards (Kirke- utdannings- og forskningsdepartementet, 1995). Another significant argument was that the dual subject solution meant that the mainstream group was split when religions and beliefs were on the agenda, and hence also when important ethical problems and issues relating to the multicultural and pluralistic society with its multiple views on life were discussed. In the official Norwegian report NOU 1995:9 *Identity and dialogue*, which was the point of departure for the introduction of CRB, concerns were expressed that this division of students might convey indirect and undesired messages, e.g.: a) when religion and ethics are discussed, it is natural for people to split up into separate groups; b) religion and ethics cover such dangerous, sensitive and difficult issues that students cannot be together when they are on the schedule; c) in contrast to other subjects, this subject is where students should preferably learn about their own faith and traditions – not those of others (Kirke- utdannings- og forskningsdepartementet, 1995). As a consequence of these concerns, the Parliament decided – within the framework of the unitary school – to introduce the new combined subject CRB, which both replaced and included *Christian knowledge* and *Philosophy of life*.

The new subject was designed with a view to adapting teaching to students' different cultural, religious and philosophical backgrounds. They should all be taught about their own and the others' traditions in these areas, both the life interpretation they were familiar with from home as well as those they met through their class- and schoolmates. In this way qualitative differentiation occurred in two directions at the same time, reflecting the assumption of the OECD (2005) that knowledge about both one's own and the culture of others is a precondition for openness, tolerance and dialogue (Kirke- utdannings- og forskningsdepartementet, 1995:10; 1996:89-90). As every student encountered elements that were both familiar and new, while what was known and what was new varied according to students' religious and philosophical backgrounds, and while it also was a precondition that students' different backgrounds should be treated with respect and recognition, the school's ordinary teaching of religion and beliefs is an illustration of a principle of dual qualitative differentiation as suggested by Engen (1989; cf. 2009a), that is also inherent in dual bilingual programs and their aims of additive bilingualism, pluralism and enrichment.

But dual qualitative differentiation also gave the mainstreaming concept itself additional meaning. While the religion and belief subject for all students was still deeply influenced by the dominant cultural context, the subject's cultural context was no longer mono-cultural. It was differentiated and characterized by diversity. Both the qualitative and organizational differentiation previously associated with *Christian knowledge* and *Philosophy of life* was thus abandoned through CRB, in a dual sense. On the one hand, all students were to be together in the mainstream classroom, thus clearing the ground for a plural informal socialization. On the other hand all students were to meet a differentiated and multifaceted subject, in which dialogue between representatives of different backgrounds was the context also of formal socialization. Adaptive education was therefore no longer primarily seen as a matter of individualisation, according to the principle quantitative differentiation. It was primarily perceived as a matter of adapting to the *differentiated pupil group as a whole* in the new and pluralistic classroom. This new meaning of the mainstreaming concept – socially and substantially – is a prerequisite for dual qualitative differentiation.

It is probably no surprise that the introduction of CRB attracted severe criticism from various quarters. Families, with the support of the Norwegian Humanist Association<sup>22</sup>, from 1996 pursued a

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<sup>22</sup> The biggest non-religious belief organisation in Norway.

case through the Norwegian courts and to the international UN Human Rights Committee (opinion in 2004) and the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) to obtain full exemption from the subject for their children. The two international bodies upheld their claim. The ECHR verdict in 2007 was that the CRB curriculum was not sufficiently neutral and pluralistic, giving as its grounds the combination of the schools' then Christian object clause, the preponderance of Christianity-related material in the curriculum and some qualitative formulations in the curricular objectives of the subject (ECHR, 2007; Lied, 2009).

As a result of the ECHR verdict, the curriculum was revised in 2008 and 2009. In 2008 the subject was renamed *Religion, Beliefs and Ethics* (RBE<sup>23</sup>) and the curriculum was brought more in line with the recommendations of the ECHR. The subject's preamble now emphasises that both the external and internal diversity of religions and philosophies of life are to be clearly brought out in the teaching, and that respect for human rights and the ethical foundations of these rights together with respect for religious values should be highlighted (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2008). In January 2009 the schools got a new object clause, where the different religions and beliefs are all treated as suppliers of values for the Norwegian school system. All this contributes to reinforcing the principle of dual qualitative differentiation.

It is only as a subject in which ordinary teaching is characterised by dual qualitative differentiation adapted to the student group *as a whole*, that RBE can give all students – majority and minority – the kind of special competence OECD is encouraging (OECD, 2005). The knowledge and understanding of different life interpretations can give students insight into other cultures, other ways of living and hence also tolerance across religious and philosophical boundaries. In this way the subject creates an inclusive environment, not only socially, but also culturally. Dialogue as a teaching tool in this context, however, cannot have as its primary aim to create consensus. Rather, it must be seen as an instrument to elucidate different positions and create the will and ability to find how to live with these differences (Bakhtin, 1979/1998; Dysthe & Igland, 2001).

Today, competence covering a wide range of views and beliefs is probably more important than ever, not only because Western countries are becoming increasingly multi-religious, but also because religion in recent decades has aroused increased public interest.

But both the integrative and cognitive functions of dual qualitative differentiation will be strengthened if the approach is also combined with bilingual subject instruction, which is also a characteristic inherent in some strong bilingual programs. Bilingual subject instruction either requires a bilingual teacher or two teachers cooperating. But as shown by Cummins (Schechter & Cummins, 2003) even monolingual teachers can implement bilingual teaching, if language minority students are encouraged – in cooperation with classmates – to use their home language as a working instrument in solving their assignments – for example in relation to work plans. Still they may be expected to report to the teacher and communicate with the group in the majority language. Bilingual subject instruction may of course be arranged within the mainstream classroom, also independently of dual qualitative differentiation.

In conclusion, we will state the principle we have identified behind the subject RBE demonstrates that schools can adapt their teaching to the linguistic and cultural background of the students through qualitative differentiation also without organizational differentiation, either in combination with or supplemented by bilingual subject instruction. Thus the RBE subject may also serve as a curricular program for other school subjects, especially those with an artistic and humanistic basis, but probably also subjects based on the social and natural sciences.

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<sup>23</sup> The Norwegian acronym is RLE



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*Thor Ola Engen is a professor of education at the Hedmark University College, Norway, where he is member of the management team of the interdisciplinary research group: Multicultural schools and kindergartens, and member of the management team for a masters program in Adaptive education. Engen has conducted and managed several research projects and published extensively.*